

Little World/Mundinho:

An “Antropofagic” and Autobiographic Performance

(Uma Performance Antropofagica e Autobiografica)

Exegesis/*Exegese*: Offerings

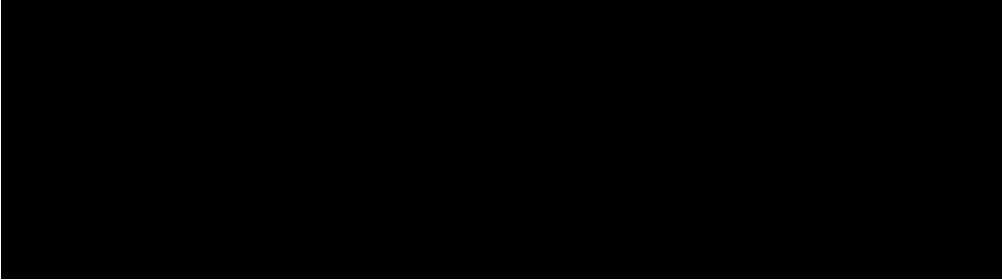
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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Critical Performance Project; School of Human Movement, Recreation &
Performance; Faculty of Arts, Education & Human Development
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Declaration

I, Simone Silva Reis Mott, declare that the PhD thesis entitled ***Little World/Mundinho: An “Antropofagic” & Autobiographic Performance*** is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.



November 2007

Contents

| | | |
|-------------|--|----|
| Offering 1. | Ex-Votos | 2 |
| 1.1 | Salvador da Bahia, 2004..... | 2 |
| 1.2 | Ex-Votos at the Igreja do Nosso Senhor do Bomfim | 4 |
| 1.3 | Ex-votos in performance..... | 5 |
| Offering 2. | (Some) autoethnography | 7 |
| 2.1 | Autoethnography | 7 |
| 2.2 | My family | 9 |
| 2.2.1 | Unimportant little objects..... | 10 |
| 2.2.2 | Encounters with childhood memories | 11 |
| 2.2.3 | My mother | 12 |
| 2.2.4 | My father and his family | 12 |
| 2.2.5 | My mother's maid, Maria..... | 14 |
| Offering 3. | (Some) questions (and some statements) | 15 |
| 3.1 | Do que é que se trata esse projeto? | 15 |
| 3.2 | Alguma coisa / something | 17 |
| 3.3 | Being myself, being Brazilian | 17 |
| 3.4 | Estou perdida? | 18 |
| Offering 4. | Brazilian spirituality and <i>Little World</i> | 20 |
| 4.1 | Introduction..... | 20 |
| 4.2 | Candomblé | 21 |
| 4.2.1 | An overview of Candomblé..... | 21 |
| 4.2.2 | Feminine power..... | 22 |
| 4.3 | Spiritism..... | 24 |
| 4.3.1 | Spiritism, a personal interjection | 26 |
| 4.3.2 | Francisco Cândido Xavier (1910-2002)..... | 27 |
| 4.4 | Umbanda..... | 29 |
| 4.5 | Further spiritual hybridity & eclecticism..... | 33 |
| 4.5.1 | Mother's milk | 33 |
| 4.5.2 | Tia Neiva and the Vale do Amanhecer | 36 |
| 4.5.3 | More Egyptologists | 37 |
| 4.5.4 | Performing in a Trance? | 37 |
| Offering 5. | Anthropophagy & cross-/inter-/extra-cultural performance | 40 |
| 5.1 | Cross-/inter-/extra-cultural performance..... | 41 |
| 5.1.1 | A world in flux..... | 41 |
| 5.1.2 | Inter-/extra-cultural performance | 41 |
| 5.1.3 | Australian intercultural work | 42 |
| 5.2 | Anthropophagy | 43 |
| 5.2.1 | First anthropophagic bites..... | 43 |
| 5.2.2 | Anthropophagy in the theatre—an example | 45 |
| 5.2.3 | <i>Tropicália</i> : anthropophagy goes pop | 47 |
| Offering 6. | Guillermo Gómez-Peña | 48 |
| 6.1 | When is a Mexican a Brazilian? | 48 |
| 6.2 | The Dangerous Latin | 50 |
| 6.3 | Ethnocyborgs | 51 |
| 6.4 | Religious Metafiction..... | 51 |
| 6.5 | Gómez-Peña as cannibal | 52 |
| 6.6 | Guillermo Gómez-Peña's dream inspires my performance: | 53 |
| 6.6.1 | A Performance Artist dreams of being an actor | 53 |
| 6.7 | Guillermo Gómez-Peña querido, Who am I? | 53 |
| 6.8 | Gómez-Peña on being Chicano: | 55 |
| 6.9 | When is a Brazilian a Mexican? | 55 |
| Offering 7. | Abject feminine characters | 58 |
| 7.1 | Macabéa and The Hour of the Star..... | 58 |
| 7.1.1 | A synopsis | 58 |
| 7.1.2 | Alterity, instability and hybridity | 59 |
| 7.1.3 | The character-actor hybrid | 62 |
| 7.1.4 | Feeling of Loss, Laziness, and Migration, | 63 |
| 7.1.5 | Macabéa as an unknown butoh-Carmem Miranda..... | 64 |

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----|
| 7.2 | Josefine the Songstress | 65 |
| 7.2.1 | A vulnerable talent | 65 |
| 7.3 | Macabéa, Josefine and the abject | 66 |
| 7.3.1 | Kristeva's <i>abjection</i> | 67 |
| 7.3.2 | Art versus Law, Morality and Religion | 68 |
| 7.3.3 | The abject mouse | 68 |
| 7.3.4 | Macabéa—a study in abjection | 69 |
| 7.4 | Me as Josaphine | 72 |
| 7.5 | What happens now? | 75 |
| Offering 8. | Love & Dislocation: Lispector, Cixous, Kristeva and Me | 78 |
| 8.1 | A mosaic | 78 |
| 8.2 | Give me your hand | 78 |
| 8.3 | Strangers | 80 |
| 8.4 | Baby love | 81 |
| 8.5 | Lost | 82 |
| 8.6 | I forgot my mother's name: Antonomy? Antonyna? | 84 |
| 8.7 | Love imensurable love | 84 |
| 8.8 | Some letters: why letters? | 86 |
| 8.8.1 | To Clarice | 87 |
| 8.8.2 | To Hélène | 90 |
| Offering 9. | Processes—theatrical development | 95 |
| 9.1 | Introduction | 95 |
| 9.2 | First south, then west, then east again | 96 |
| 9.3 | Little World I | 96 |
| 9.3.1 | An African goddess | 96 |
| 9.3.2 | The scene and the goddess' genesis | 98 |
| 9.3.3 | Onde estão os orixás? | 100 |
| 9.4 | PICA Performance: <i>Little World II</i> | 101 |
| 9.4.1 | Gisela's Letter | 108 |
| 9.5 | Stories on objects for <i>Little World III</i> | 109 |
| 9.5.1 | Pink jacket | 109 |
| 9.5.2 | Teeth | 110 |
| 9.5.3 | The dress | 111 |
| 9.5.4 | <i>Novelty</i> glasses for children's parties | 111 |
| 9.6 | <i>Little World III</i> | 112 |
| 9.6.1 | Interpretation between the lines | 112 |
| 9.6.2 | The set | 113 |
| 9.6.3 | Vampire nuns, Roberto Carlos and a graveyard for dolls | 114 |
| 9.6.4 | Flight Control | 118 |
| 9.6.5 | The macho assailant, violence & exploitation | 119 |
| 9.6.6 | José Eduardo, bananas and the supremacy of the fox hunters | 121 |
| 9.6.7 | Dinosaurs, false teeth, sweets and kangaroos | 122 |
| 9.6.8 | The Chicken in <i>Little World</i> | 124 |
| 9.6.9 | Freira Josefina—Pomba Gira—Erê | 125 |
| 9.6.10 | Anthropophagic Vampire | 126 |
| 9.6.11 | Examiners, audience and <i>pequi</i> | 126 |
| 9.6.12 | The little world of the dolls | 127 |
| 9.6.13 | Pink | 127 |
| 9.6.14 | Monster | 128 |
| 9.6.15 | Macabéa | 129 |
| 9.6.16 | <i>Flor</i> —a flower | 130 |
| 9.6.17 | Galinhada | 131 |
| 9.6.18 | Family slide show | 132 |
| 9.6.19 | Tragic, cross-cultural hybridism? Or will she dance Samba. | 133 |
| 9.6.20 | The ideal Brazilian woman? | 133 |
| 9.7 | <i>Little World III</i> Collaborators | 134 |
| 9.7.1 | Carlos Gomes | 134 |
| 9.7.2 | Sandra Long | 135 |
| 9.7.3 | Alexandre Malta | 135 |
| 9.7.4 | Iain Mott | 135 |
| 9.8 | Production Materials | 136 |
| 9.8.1 | Costume materials | 136 |

| | | |
|--------------|---|-----|
| 9.8.2 | Furniture | 137 |
| 9.8.3 | Toys | 137 |
| 9.8.4 | Other Objects..... | 137 |
| Offering 10. | Little World Script..... | 138 |
| 10.1 | A empregada e Roberto Carlos | 138 |
| 10.2 | I like a boy | 140 |
| 10.3 | Flight control | 141 |
| 10.4 | Love ate my name | 143 |
| 10.5 | Senhor Bibi Ferreira | 144 |
| 10.6 | Goodbye with the supremacy of the fox hunters | 145 |
| 10.7 | Irma Rotina | 146 |
| 10.8 | <i>Little World</i> home movie | 150 |
| 10.9 | I like pink | 151 |
| 10.10 | Vai chupar o seu pirulito! | 152 |
| 10.11 | Macabéa | 154 |
| 10.12 | Carinhoso | 154 |
| 10.13 | Galinha mecânica | 157 |
| 10.14 | Slide show | 158 |
| 10.15 | Finale | 159 |

Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1.1 Sala dos Milagres..... | 3 |
| Figure 1.2 Ex-voto for my brother's liver (figado) | 4 |
| Figure 1.3 Pictorial ex-votos at Nosso Senhor do Bonfim | 5 |
| Figure 2.1 On holiday (bottom right) with family and friends in Brasília | 10 |
| Figure 4.1 Xavier from his 1973 CBS release | 29 |
| Figure 4.2 Boats with offerings, Festa de Iemanjá, Umbanda ritual in Salvador | 30 |
| Figure 4.3 Preparing offerings to Iemanjá, Salvador..... | 31 |
| Figure 4.4 Mãe-de-santo with offering, Festa de Iemanjá | 32 |
| Figure 4.5 Pai-de-santo Raul de Xangô embodying (quite literally) the Exú spirit (photo Mila Petrillo, Brasília 2005) | 33 |
| Figure 4.6 One of my earliest performances/rituals—a witch giving blessings..... | 35 |
| Figure 4.7 Man in trance, Festa de Iemanjá..... | 38 |
| Figure 4.8 Pai-de-santo Raul de Xangô during Exu ritual (photo Mila Petrillo, Brasília 2005) | 39 |
| Figure 7.1 Cachorro quente brasileiro com molho de pimenta (Brazilian hotdog with chilli sauce) | 70 |
| Figure 8.1 LP including Bethânia's version of Carinhoso | 85 |
| Figure 10.1 <i>Little World</i> Poster from La Mama production | 138 |
| Figure 10.2 Kangaroo plays music boxes (photo Pina Raiola) | 139 |
| Figure 10.3 Roberto Carlos! Eu te amo!—I love you! (photo Pina Raiola) | 140 |
| Figure 10.4 Mouseferatu—in childish gothic horror: Guilherme paid me to do that! (photo Pina Raiola) | 140 |
| Figure 10.5 Flight Control: Simone flies plane (video Pete Brownstein) | 141 |
| Figure 10.6 What's your name? (video Pete Brownstein) | 143 |
| Figure 10.7 Senhor Bibi Ferreira conceals weapon (photo Pina Raiola)..... | 144 |
| Figure 10.8 Sr Ferreira screams dropping the baby (video Pete Brownstein) | 145 |
| Figure 10.9 Playing José Eduardo (photo Pina Raiola)..... | 146 |
| Figure 10.10 Nun embodying spirits (photo Pina Raiola) | 147 |
| Figure 10.11 Nun in ecstatic action amongst ex-votos (video Pete Brownstein) | 147 |
| Figure 10.12 Nun gives blessings—audience poised to shoot (photo Pina Raiola) | 148 |
| Figure 10.13 Eu vou contar até três—I'll count to three (video Pete Brownstein) | 149 |
| Figure 10.14 Nun shot during confession (photo Pina Raiola) | 149 |
| Figure 10.15 Simone, left, films with toy camera (photo Pina Raiola) | 150 |
| Figure 10.16 Toy movie projection detail (video Carlos Gomes & Simone Reis) | 151 |
| Figure 10.17 Where did you buy this gorgeous jacket? (video Pete Brownstein) | 151 |
| Figure 10.18 Flash: Melbournian revolution (photo Pina Raiola) | 152 |
| Figure 10.19 Monster (photo Pina Raiola)..... | 153 |
| Figure 10.20 Monster in cot (photo Pina Raiola) | 153 |
| Figure 10.21 Macabéa in the traffic (photo Pina Raiola) | 154 |
| Figure 10.22 Simone eats chrysanthemum (photo Pina Raiola) | 155 |
| Figure 10.23 Meu coração não sei porque (photo Pina Raiola)..... | 156 |
| Figure 10.24 Chicken jumping hoops (photo Pina Raiola)..... | 157 |
| Figure 10.25 <i>Sucesso!</i> Chicken lays egg (video Pete Brownstein) | 157 |
| Figure 10.26 Simone holding small projection screen (photo Pina Raiola) | 158 |
| Figure 10.27 This is my father—toy slide projection detail (video Pete Brownstein) | 159 |
| Figure 10.28 <i>Mulher do Samba</i> —in carnival dress (video Carlos Gomes & Simone Reis) | 159 |
| Figure 10.29 Soccer ball implants (video Pete Brownstein) | 160 |
| Figure 10.30 Final bow: and this is really me (photo Pina Raiola) | 161 |

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Sim claro, Yes sure: thanks Josefine ... *E Macabéa querida, amada Maca do meu coração, aonde você se encontrar nesse momento, escute, por favor, o meu muitíssimo infinitésimo obrigada!!! Obrigada! Obrigada! Maca não se preocupe querida, nem todas as pessoas do mundo são boas datilografas.* Don't worry Maca, not all people in the world are good typists. I typed all this with two fingers!

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Abstract

Do que é que se trata esse projeto? É sobre mim, que sou nada, transformada numa transitória, risonha, híbrida camundongo-mulher-artista, procurando pelo que está além da verdade de não mentir. Trata-se de mim, uma mulher patética, vestida como uma menina pilotando uma lambreta e carregando uma maletinha (de qual saem sons, música, imagens e vozes) num cirquinho imaginário, engraçado, falso, inexistente e pobre.

How can we identify and emerge from the chain of bodies, territories and cultures, called "my body", my "self"? Can the performing body transcend cultural boundaries? What would such transcendence look like? If it happens, what can it say about a possible intercultural body format? How to create a performance with an extracultural approach?

Invasion, migration, and population dislocation over the last five centuries has caused significant movement amongst global populations. Cross-cultural performances have developed from these invasions, migrations, and dislocations. The late 20th and early 21st Centuries have seen the development in the "West" of intercultural and extracultural theatre/performance. This project presents a performance derived from the unique combination of Brazilian and Australian performance practice. It sheds light on the power of the theatrical event for disparate audiences, and on the performer's experience of the creative process while generating a new performance text that addresses the questions: What is it to "be" "Brazilian"? Does "Brazil" exist? What is it to be "Latin American"? Does "Australia" exist? This project, Little World: Four "Autoethnographic" Performances, explores the author/performer's "being" "Brazilian", being "Latin American" in "Australia", and a "performer" in "theatre", through autobiographical and autoethnographic performance drawing on the writings of Clarice Lispector, Franz Kafka, and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, and the performance practices of Brazilian Candomblé and Japanese Butoh. It attempts to place the spectator in the position of the performer, encountering "Australia" through another culture and language. And following Oswald de Andrade's "anthropophagy", it proposes and enacts the cannibalising of the "foreign(er)", the digestion of foreign stereotypes to produce new identities.

The thesis component of the project will provide a first person autobiographical and autoethnographic account addressing the questions raised above; the performance-making processes; and the social and theoretical contexts and the aesthetic elements of the performance.

Do que é que se trata esse projeto? É sobre mim, que sou nada, transformada numa transitória ... What is this project about? It is about me who am nothing, transformed into a transitory, laughing, hybrid mouse-woman-performer, searching for what is beyond the truth of not lying. It is about me, a pathetic woman dressed as a little girl driving an electric scooter and carrying a little suitcase (from which comes sounds, music, images and voices) in an imaginary funny, fake, inexistent, poor, little circus.

Estou possuída? Am I possessed?

*A creature with enormous 'bee' glasses, dressed
in black—a goddess with plastic teeth riding a
scooter, and very badly so.*

*I will never be sporty like Australians. I will never
ride a bike wearing a helmet.*

*Isso é a prova do meu "subdesenvolvimento"
terceiro mundista?*

*Is this proof of my third world
"underdevelopment"?*

— Simone Silva Reis Mott

Offering 1. Ex-Votos

ex-voto

/eks voto/

- *noun (pl. ex-votos) an offering given in order to fulfil a vow.*
— ORIGIN from Latin *ex voto* 'from a vow'.

— Compact Oxford English Dictionary

1.1 Salvador da Bahia, 2004

In 2004 I visited the *Igreja do Nosso Senhor do Bomfim*, a church in the city of Salvador da Bahia, in the northeast of Brazil. The church is famous for *milagres*, miracles—particularly miraculous recoveries from illness. I was in Salvador to research the Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé and it seemed important to visit a church with practices extending beyond the norms of Catholicism. The *Igreja do Nosso Senhor do Bomfim* is a site for making votive offerings, *ex-votos*—a practice with a long history, well before the birth of Christ.

Na primeira visita a igreja estava fechada. Não muito tempo depois eu ouvi notícias terríveis de que meu irmão—que administra uma pousada, um hotel particular pequeno, numa cidade de praia entre Salvador e Rio de Janeiro—tinha sido baleado em um assalto em seu trabalho na cidade de Vitória, mais para o sul. On this first visit the church was closed. Not long after, I heard terrible news that my brother—who manages a *pousada*, a small private hotel—had been shot in an assault at his work in the coastal city of Vitória mid-way between Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. He was shot by a group of youths in the reception area in what we believe was a kidnapping attempt on his son. His son was also shot but fortunately escaped serious injury. My brother sustained injuries to his neck and spine, his liver, his lungs and to the lining of his heart.

Before leaving for Vitória to see my brother in hospital, I was compelled to again visit the church, this time with personal motives in addition to professional ones. When I arrived I talked to the priest and he confirmed that presenting *ex-votos* to saints is not strictly a catholic practice. It is a practice he explained that comes spontaneously from the people, and with such a weight of tradition, the church of *Nosso Senhor do Bomfim* has a dedicated chamber for *ex-votos*, the *Sala dos Milagres*, the miracle room. Still shaken by the news of my brother's assault, I found the little room terrifying; a

bizarre, crowded, multi-layered, complex and over decorated installation on illness, dreams, desire, fantasy and pain.



Figure 1.1 Sala dos Milagres

I told the priest about my brother's assault and he smiled kindly when I asked him: *eu devo trazer o presente para Nosso Senhor do Bonfim antes ou depois que a cura for feita?* "should I bring the gift to Nosso Senhor do Bonfim (Our Lord of the Good End) before or after the healing is made?" He answered that there are no rules but mostly people bring the gifts after the materialization of the request. Perhaps prematurely, I had bought in the morning, little wax effigies of the many parts of my brother's body that I knew were shot, from one of the many shops near the church. My brother was in intensive care with his life in the balance. I was soon to return to Australia and would not have been able to place the ex-votos if my brother survived. In my praying, I explained the urgency to Senhor do Bomfin and that I was probably making my offering *in advance*. I felt sure however that Senhor do Bonfim would help my brother.

As an artist and solo performer I am prone to relate life's occurrences to my work. I thought perhaps (and I was concerned about the Senhor getting confused) that doing things *wrongly* was like an element of performance, a silly mistake or a kind of frightening heresy. It seemed part of my ongoing research into being a *palhaça*, a clown, a clumsy practitioner of ex-votos.

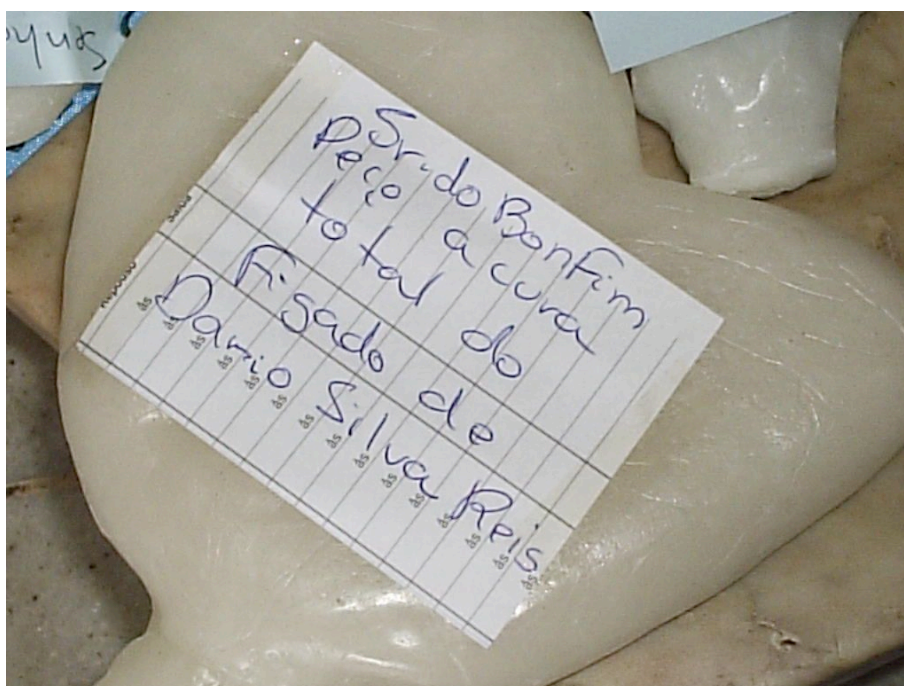


Figure 1.2 Ex-voto for my brother's liver (figado)

1.2 Ex-Votos at the Igreja do Nosso Senhor do Bomfim

Ex-votos are an embodiment of gratitude for divine healing, a pact with the divine or as it was in my case, an open request for help. Traditionally, people make promises and offerings to deities or saints out of necessity—a need borne of hardship and a humble acceptance of ignorance and unimportance. All sorts of people make offerings of candles, fabrics, wooden pieces, sculptures, toys, paintings and pictures. Sometimes, and especially at the Igreja do Nosso Senhor do Bomfim, injured or diseased parts of the body are represented in paintings and sculpture and presented in thanks. In addition to wax effigies at the church are grotesque pictures of people in pain in hospitals, pictures of pregnant women smiling, of healthy and sick babies, children undergoing surgery, women in wedding dresses, and young people in beautiful clothes at medicine or law graduation ceremonies. There are also emotional notes scrawled on pieces of paper thanking the Senhor do Bomfim for the healing of relatives. The notes are testament to all manner of human suffering and fundamental needs: notes describing almost dying as a result of terrible accidents; others, expressing gratitude for finally being able to buy a simple family house; for finally getting a job after years of unemployment and near-starvation.



Figure 1.3 Pictorial ex-votos at Nosso Senhor do Bonfim

1.3 Ex-votos in performance

In the context of my research, ex-votos can be an artistic manifestation based on faith and despair, feelings of dislocation, impoverishment and disempowerment.

In 8.8, *Processes*, I will detail how ex-votos and my experience at the Igreja do Nosso Senhor do Bomfim inspired aspects of my final performance for this project, the *Little World* performance presented at La Mama Theatre, Melbourne, in December 2006. As I will describe in greater depth, we hung as offerings pieces of dismembered dolls: heads, arms, legs, and torsos, as well as making arrangements of toys, candles and flowers under the stairs of the La Mama performance space. The violence and the shootings in Brazil encouraged me to develop a character called *Irma Rotina*, Sister Routine, who interacted with the offerings. The nun distributed cap-guns to the audience and asked them to shoot her while she made odd and childlike confessions in a pink, upholstered, child-sized armchair. A second character, *Senhor Bibi Ferreira*, donning *um bigode falso*, a false moustache, attempted a *child-abduction* of a doll with a pistol hidden behind plastic flowers presented as a gift.

These characters and offerings amongst many others constitute *Little World*, an intercultural performance investigating Brazilian culture, spirituality

and psyche through autoethnographic performance and from the perspective of a displaced artist finding her way in a new country. *Então, também, essa tese é uma oferta: um pacto com o divino, um pedido de ajuda; um testemunho de sofrimento e graça, uma expressão de gratidão, uma manifestação de fé e desespero, sentimentos de deslocamento, empobrecimento e fragilidade.* So, too, this exegesis is an offering: a pact with the divine; a call for help; a testament to suffering and need; an expression of gratitude; a manifestation of faith and despair, feelings of dislocation, impoverishment, and disempowerment. Like the Sala dos Milagres at Igreja do Nosso Senhor do Bomfim, it may seem sometimes bizarre, crowded, multi-layered, complex, and over-decorated; the scientific numbering (1.1, 2.1.2 & c) holding the disparate elements, **which really can be read in any order**, in tension. I assert, emphasise, underline, make it clear to you, that *este projeto é sobre performance, não é ciências sociais*, this project is about performance, it is not social science. Gayatri Spivak famously asked, "Can the subaltern speak?" (Spivak 1988). Here, she speaks. And in her own voice. But aware that she is enfolded in the processes and places she speaks against. A Brazilian-Australian, an Austral-Brazilian.

Offering 2. (Some) autoethnography

When I look too much for a meaning, I do not find it. Meaning is as little mine as what exists in the beyond. Meaning comes to me in breathing and not in words, it is breath.

— Clarice Lispector

I am a Brazilian intercultural performer with knowledge of *Candomblé*, *Umbanda* and *Espiritismo* (see Offering 4) and I come from a family of healers. I have a special interest in translation between Afro-Brazilian theatre, literature, and ritual, and their “Western” (that is, North-American and European derived) equivalents. I am interested in research-based drama and autoethnographic performance, and since 1987 I have been engaged in the work of linking such theatre to literature. As an actor, performer, and director, I have been interested in the process of producing “messy” autoethnographic performances and texts.

I began this exegesis writing of my brother’s tragedy in Vitória, and I have hinted at the complex spirituality that interpenetrates almost every facet of Brazilian life. Maintaining this momentum, the familial and cultural flavour will continue; the autoethnographic content and discussion manifest in the performances of *Little World* and throughout this written exegesis.

As an introduction to my research approach, I include here a brief introduction to autoethnography. The remaining sections in this Offering serve to make an important introduction—to my family.

2.1 Autoethnography

By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life.

— Carolyn Ellis & Arthur Bochner
(Ellis & Bochner 2000)

[T]he self is a social phenomenon

— Kathryn Church
(Church 1995)

Building on Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner’s article “Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject”, Armour, Moore and Stevenson define autoethnography as a form of autobiographical writing with “multiple layers of consciousness” that connects personal elements with that

of the cultural, and may take a variety of forms such as stories, poems and fictions (Armour et al. 2001; See also Ellis & Bochner 2000). Elaine Bass Jenks writes that, "while autoethnographers write about themselves, their goal is to touch a world beyond the self of the writer" (Bass Jenks 2002:174).

Susan Bennett (Bennett 2004) outlines some useful points to define the field. According to Bennett, an autoethnography *is*:

- *An analytical/objective personal account*
- *About the self/writer as part of a group or culture*
- *Often a description of a conflict of cultures*
- *Often an analysis of being different or an outsider*
- *Usually written to an audience not a part of the group*
- *An attempt to see self as others might*
- *An opportunity to explain differences from the inside*
- *Sometimes a traditional essay answering the five Ws¹*
- *Sometimes a typical essay with topic sentences and three to five supporting examples*
- *Always an attempt to explain one element of self to other*
- *An explanation of how one is "othered"*

Advocates of autoethnography frequently allude to the promise of certain *universal truths* in autoethnographic writings. On the position of Kathryn Church (see Church 1995:5), Andrew Sparkes writes, that "what we experience and present of ourselves as subjective or personal is simultaneously objective and public" (Sparkes 2002:216). He quotes Church:

I choose to foreground my own voice. This is not narcissism; it is not an egocentric indulgence ... Critical autobiography is vital intellectual work ... The social analysis accomplished by this form is based on two assumptions: first, that it is possible to learn about the general from the particular; second, that the self is a social phenomenon. I assume that my subjectivity is filled with the voices of other people. Writing about myself is a way of writing about these others and about the worlds which we create/inhabit ... Because my subjective experience is part of the world, the story which emerges is not completely private and idiosyncratic. (Church in Sparkes 2002:216)

The idea of autoethnography as research, is however one commonly regarded with suspicion in academic circles, particularly the social sciences (Church 1995; Sparkes 2002) where it is an approach often perceived to work in opposition to "scientific objectivity" (Sparkes 2002:214). Sparkes points to the need for autoethnographic writers to recognise the charge of "self-indulgence" frequently levelled against them—that it is indeed a *real* risk to be "self-indulgent rather than self-knowing, self-respectful, self-sacrificing, or

¹ Who, what, where, when, and why.

self-luminous" (Sparkes 2002:214). He quotes from a critique on "narrative non-fiction" by Blake Morrison (see Morrison 1998), that "Confessionalism has to know when to hold back ... It takes art. Without art, confessionalism is masturbation. Only with art does it become empathy" (Morrison in Sparkes 2002:215).

Again on *art*, Stacy Holman Jones, writing on the emotional power of autoethnography, makes a connection with torch-singing, stating they are both storytelling activities that "enact a life story within larger cultural and social contexts and histories". She writes that these stories are often lamentations that can provoke activated responses in recipients:

Why do we tell such tales? To inscribe our own melancholy, mourning, and release, and to evoke these same emotions in our readers and our audiences. More than this, though, we seek to create a live, charged exchange with an audience (Holman Jones 2002:51).

Holman Jones also writes that the author of an autoethnography, by looking inwards before expressing outwards, encourages self-reflection in readers (Holman Jones 2002:53), presumably, leading by example.

This project is broadly autoethnographic. It is also performance research that is, it is research in, by, through, and about performance as much as it is about "me": *it is not, and is not intended to be, a form of social science, or an illustration of social science "findings"*. As Victoria University regulations in relation to creative work allow, I'm not aiming simply at a discursively expressed critical position (as understood in traditional academic research): I'm looking for productive creative relationships that can provide insights into my intercultural performance and the connection of the personal to the cultural. Thus, I have created a cross-cultural fictional mosaic of myself. Or should that be, a fictional cross-cultural mosaic that could be "myself"? In so doing, I am agreeing with Brian Massumi in his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's work:

The question is not, Is it true? But, Does it work? What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body? (Massumi 1992:3).

2.2 My family

I grew up in a middle-class family in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, in a city called Uberaba. The city, by comparison to other towns in Brazil, is

affluent. It is a regional farming centre and a university town with thousands of students from all over the state. My family has lived in Uberaba for several generations and I can trace my family heritage back to Portuguese and Italian roots. This introduction to my family—and some notes on their relevance to my performance work—is just that, an introduction. I will relate other stories throughout the exegesis.



Figure 2.1 On holiday (bottom right) with family and friends in Brasilia

2.2.1 Unimportant little objects

In my solo work, I have never been able to hide my ideas behind the character. I have always been *too honest* to pretend to be somebody else on the stage. This is a difficulty for an actor, and an issue for more traditional approaches to theatre. I have to talk as “myself”; I have to be a voice; a singularity. I am doing it right now.

Talking again about the *Little World* performance(s)—you see (don’t you?), even in my thesis the performance and my life cross boundaries—I realized that the character’s personal little world was insignificant: unimportant little objects, “old fashioned” themes like love, loss, family, country, memories.

My grandmother has no public importance, but the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector has. I write about Lispector in many sections of this thesis and her stories helped shape characters in the *Little World* performances. For me, my grandmother and Lispector are the same, despite the disparity in their profiles: my ghost friends in my solitude in Australia—they know me well. My experience of my grandmother's illiteracy taught me something of being a foreigner in Australia, something of foreignness and alienation. How could my grandmother tell so many stories without even speaking correct Portuguese? Why can't Clarice Lispector be explained? Why was my father so critical of so many things in Brazil? He used to sigh every night watching the *Jornal Nacional*.² If you play with the family puzzle, you will start doing Latin American magical realism right now. How absurd my family is, I would say: my mother believes in communication with spirits, my father never even believed in God.

2.2.2 Encounters with childhood memories

During the creative process of *Little World*, I remembered my grandmother telling stories in the dark of night, without electricity, by the woodstove, through the night. We listened intently to those stories; they were so human, so sad, and so humorous. We were children and on holidays with our parents at her farm near Uberaba. I was particularly scared of bats—and there were many under the rough-hewn roof of her farmhouse.

My grandfather, my mother's father and my grandmother's first husband, was a healer. Due to his beliefs in parallel worlds—he was an *espírita*³—he was surrounded by mentally ill people who came to him for help, especially people who heard voices and saw phantom figures. The farm was full of physically and mentally disabled people—crippled, deaf, blind, slow, and mad. As a well-brought up and protected girl from Uberaba, I experienced something of jolt each time I visited.

After my grandfather's death, my grandmother remarried and adopted five children whose mother was severely mentally ill. They had been abandoned in the bush close to my grandmother's house. I loved playing with them during the holidays and the way they spoke "bad Portuguese"; my sister

² The daily news on the *Globo* TV channel.

³ A practitioner of *Espiritismo* or Spiritism, a religion popular in Brazil that involves communication with spirits. Spiritism is discussed in detail in Section 4.3.

and I would create translations back into proper Portuguese—a translation service for the family.

We all enjoyed telling each other ghost stories. Memories of this were a source of inspiration for *Little World I*—the first of three stages in the development of Little World (see 9.1)—and would ultimately serve to establish links with a variety of feminine characters.

2.2.3 My mother

My mother has the same charitable spirit as her parents, and when I was a child, she would regularly take me to visit the mentally-ill, the elderly, and the poor in Uberaba. I enjoyed going, but sometimes became nauseated, especially when I had to greet the poor and the aged with kisses, as they were not always clean in the charity houses. There was a woman called Maria das Bonecas who made beautiful dolls from fabric. She was senile and all her dolls had the same face. It sounds cruel when I remember how excited they were about our visits. I wonder if those people had any space to be individuals—at least a little. Remembering her dolls now, I have to admit that I feel something of a chill, and a certain sadness. At the time, whenever I showed signs of shock or amazement my mother would say “This is life my daughter!”

My mother was afraid of dying when she was pregnant with me. She was forty-two and caesarian section was not yet an option in Uberaba. I was born in 1967, the year Simone de Beauvoir visited Brazil, and my mother chose the name *Simone* because of her. I imagine my mother besotted with the French feminist, watching her on the television. She was afraid of having a terrible delivery. The delivery was strange, risky. My mother says she doesn’t know what they did to rescue us but she knew that she was unconscious.

2.2.4 My father and his family

My mother is fun. My father was so serious. Why did he complain so much about Brazil? Where was my father from? Somewhere else, some better place in the world? He was Brazilian but I could tell he never felt at home. His mother was from Italy. We had pasta and wine every Sunday—quite exotic. He spoke no Italian, but why couldn’t he speak with his hands or speak loudly? This was another cliché about Italians that my mother commented on—and she lamented his reserve.

Later I learned that my father's family comes from Milan. They are Northern Italians, and I have heard that they are supposedly more "detached and cold". I wonder if this mild bitterness on living in Brazil and criticism about Brazilian ways was because of his European background. I can remember my father looking out the window, silently contemplative, and a little melancholic. He didn't care for samba or carnival.

He often wore a smile, but he was usually ironic and critical when we watched television together. His criticism peaked whenever "typical Brazilian behaviours" were shown: naked women, "samba" and sexual references. Yes, he was extremely serious, exactly like his mother, Virgulina Trezzi. She was a strong woman, a hard worker, and, of course, serious. She was probably none too happy with my grandfather's (my father's father) exploits as a musician, playing till late in *serenades*.⁴ My grandfather was a sign-writer for the railways by day, but a flautist at night—and after one late night too many, she broke his flute. Dona Virgulina may have been cold but she was not without passion.

Never an ambitious man, my grandfather brought little money home to the family and my father began his working life at the age of twelve as a packer in a factory. He finished his schooling at night and later became a public servant for the taxation department; then after my brothers were born, in middle-age and with my mother's encouragement, he studied law and became a solicitor.

Late in my grandfather's long life and after his wife died, he came to live with us. My mother adored my grandfather. At age one-hundred, he took to pacing through the house—*pacing*, albeit at a slow speed. He would repeat the phrase: *É a natureza! É a natureza!* That's nature! It transpired my grandfather was lonely, and he confided in my mother that he had *uma vida normal*, "a normal life" with his wife up until she died. He asked my mother—in characteristically rustic terms—to find him *uma mulher boa e limpinha*, "a good clean little woman"—and my mother, obligingly, began the search.

When my father received word of my mother's quest, he was horrified and put an end to it. My father went to his room, laid a hand on his chest—nursing his heart—and sighed for hours.

⁴ Even today, people in towns like Uberaba pay musicians to serenade a sweetheart. My brothers used to play in serenades too.

The day after my father died, his brother came to take my grandfather from the house. My mother was doubly bereaved—she lost her voice.

2.2.5 My mother's maid, Maria

In Brazil, many people, not just middle-class people, have *empregadas*,⁵ or maids. The reasons are complex and related to poverty, the schooling system, and the lack of affordable childcare. It is almost *expected*, an unwritten part of the social contract, for people to have an *empregada* or a *diarista*—a casual cleaner or maid—in Brazil. In Brazil, even maids have maids.

My mother's *empregada*, Maria, is around fifty years old. She told me once that her first son was the child of a prisoner. He is black, she says, because of his father. She is from Pará, a large Brazilian state in the Amazon Basin. She was orphaned as a child, and after her parents' death a local female farmer promised her and her sister a wonderful life on her farm; however, the reality proved somewhat different and they were kept as virtual slaves. One consolation was their proximity to a local penitentiary—and on Sundays, she enjoyed watching handsome men exercise in the prison grounds. One Sunday she became pregnant; she left the farm and never returned.

Maria looks Indigenous. She has a boyfriend who is very old. He uses *Viagra* and Maria gets no rest the nights he takes the tablet. She comes to work next day very tired. My mother wails in mock indignation: "You didn't sleep, I know! Maria what did you do last night?!" Maria replies: "Exactly what you think!" and laughs. She complains about *Viagra* and complains to me that the *veio—caipira*⁶ slang for *velho*, "old man"—wants to kiss her; his kisses are *babados*—"full of saliva".

This is Brazil! A maid, *Viagra*, a widow, and laughter. A street-boy, a tourist, and a baby starving under a bridge—a PhD student in Paris and another in Melbourne on Brazilian government scholarships performing autoethnographies. I am in love with Brazil. My mother found out in the town market that Maria says to friends that she takes care of a *velha*. The "old woman" is my eighty-one year old mother. She didn't like it.

⁵ The direct English translation of *empregada* is "female employee".

⁶ Country.

Offering 3. (Some) questions (and some statements)

I dreamed I was a good actor, not a performance artist, but an actor, a good one. I could realistically represent someone else in a movie or a theatre play, and I was so convincing as an actor that I would become that other person, forgetting completely who I was. The character that I represented in my dream was that of an essentialist performance artist, someone who hated naturalistic acting, social and psychological realism, someone who despised artifice, make-up, costumes, memorizing lines, being directed. In my dream, the performance artist began to rebel against the actor, myself. He did shit like not talking for a week, or only moving in slow motion for a whole day, or putting on tribal make-up and hitting streets just to challenge people's sense of familiar. He was clearly fucking with my mind, and I, the good actor, got so confused that I ended up having an identity breakdown and didn't know how to act anymore. I adopted a stereotypical fetal position and froze inside a large display case for an entire week. Luckily it was just a dream. When I finally woke up, I was the same old confused performance artist, and I was extremely thankful for not knowing how to act.

— Guillermo Gómez-Peña
(Gómez-Peña & Peña 2005:36)

3.1 Do que é que se trata esse projeto?

Do que é que se trata esse projeto? What is this project about? É sobre mim, que sou nada, transformada numa transitória, risonha, híbrida camundongo-mulher-artista, procurando pelo que está além da verdade de não mentir. It is about me who is nothing, transformed into a transitory, laughing, hybrid mouse-woman-performer, searching for what is beyond the truth of not lying.

Trata-se de mim, uma mulher patética, vestida como uma menina carregando uma maletinha (de qual saem sons, música, imagens e vozes) num cirquinho imaginário, engraçado, falso, inexistente e pobre. It is about me, a pathetic woman dressed as a little girl carrying a little suitcase (from which come sounds, music, images and voices) in an imaginary funny, fake, inexistent, poor, little circus.

This thesis is about *an actor* (good-bad-ham-contemporary-post modern-physical-*espiritual*-funny-hahaha-and-huhuhu). *É isso*, it's this exactly: and difficult to define. This actor who is me and who is not a *performance artist* due to some residual attachments to traditional and imaginary theatre—this person who calls herself *an actor* with some fears of the expectations, also spent years of her life watching melodramatic Brazilian actors in Brazilian *novellas*, soap operas on TV—listening, memorizing and

miming LPs and observing her own life and that of her family. She is too lost to be a *good actor*.

However, she is a bit self-conscious to be a performance artist. Or perhaps she is not able to be herself completely. She has the pretentious will to perhaps entertain, to scare, and to amuse with nothing more exciting than reality (it includes her dreams).

She struggles with the possibility of being an actor who is not able to relax and being a performing artist (him/herself?). However she is not able to be an actor in the way Gómez-Peña dreamed that he was. She prefers working alone like many performing artists, and for some time has hated directors.

She could be considered a clown (*palhaça*) but she has no skills or training in any kind of circus techniques (traditional or experimental). She did ballet but forgot it completely. She learned how to play the piano but also forgot that and remembers the huge disappointment she caused her father who died of a heart attack years later perhaps because of other unexpressed disappointments.

She doesn't sing very well. She acts with no characters, and with no memorized texts—at least, not completely memorized. They aren't happy spontaneous improvisations though. She tries hard to memorise but she is not able to.

Beyond all the acting and previous to all the interpretations of herself/character she likes talking about death/love/childhood. Ironically she is able to remember many of her memories of childhood and family in Brazil.

She wakes up in the morning and asks herself *onde está o público?* "where is the audience?" I will not ask why she is like that otherwise I will have to respond! Despite not knowing, and because she does not know, who she is exactly she accepts that she is lost as a person *and* as an actor. Is she in a crisis because of turning forty? Perhaps. She is not one of Grotowski's "actor saints" (Grotowski 2002); nor is she one of Eugenio Barba's "theatre anthropologists" (Barba 1995; Barba & Savarese 1991a). She is too performative to have a discipline as an actor trained for example in Meyerhold, Suzuki, or Stanislavsky's techniques. She tried hard to memorize

some clues from those Theatre Masters many times. She admits that it is a shame and feels embarrassed about her lack of memory (as a person and as an actor). For example, she could genuinely forget when her visa expires and suddenly wake up in the morning completely illegal. However, she never gives up because there is “something” that calls to her acting body.

Like a persistent, disciplined nun she keeps creating her own labyrinth in a *teatrinho* (little theatre) of life. Ironically, tragically, and hopefully humorously she is still performing. Performing is a fun search for herself, or even a running away from her own little world/closet. It is not “funny hahaha”. It is actually a pain and she hates rehearsing as well as cleaning up, making up the room and keeping the audience interested in what she does. She is not professional and will never be. Because there is a Josephina in her (see 7.2). There is a genuine illness, lack of time, money, training, and finally a lack of talent and interest in being a trained actor. There is “something” that keeps her in her career as an experimental performer-actor-director though . It sounds already great. Don’t you think?

3.2 Alguma coisa / something

“Something” is exactly what this thesis is about. “Something” is perhaps the thing that the ballet teacher said that I had once: *Simone você tem alguma coisa* “Simone you have something” What did it mean?

I should have asked her for a letter with a signature saying:

Simone Silva Reis has something,

Yours faithfully,

Iara [whose surname I don’t remember].

Where is Iara the ballerina who came every week from Sao Paulo to teach in Uberaba? What is “something” please!? I am doing a PhD in performance/theatre and I need you to explain please what “something” means! Where is Iara the ballerina?

3.3 Being myself, being Brazilian

She takes many notes of rehearsals and has piles of notebooks from hours of hard work in her tiny apartment. She seems to go nowhere.

It is a semi-autobiographical performance. Everything is somehow true and about her life despite the character always being someone “other.”

Apesar de ser uma atriz, eu continuo sendo eu mesma e vice-versa. Despite being an actor I am still myself, and the other way around. I’ve heard for years that I should be a versatile actor; that nobody should recognize me, that I should be a hidden being. These would be the most important aims for a ‘good’ versatile actor, but I’ve never pursued that.

Is it a weak point for a performer to be him/herself? Is it very narcissistic? Is it, by the way, very Brazilian? *Você não lembraria que eu sou brasileira?* Do you not remember that I am Brazilian? I don’t dance samba nor do Capoeira. I come from a quite boring place in Brazil called Minas Gerais, a state in the southeast. There is no ocean, no naked, colourful sexy women. There are many cows and wonderful cheese; yes, *futebol* (soccer) too, but I confess that I don’t care. There are many mountains, wonderful rivers, and Catholic churches. And there is *Candomblé*, *Umbanda* and *Espiritismo* (see Offering 4), beautiful colonial cities, delicious food and scary cemeteries. Yet, it is a boring place to visit and that’s why nobody knows it. It is not in the tourist guides for Brazil. *Não consta nos guias turísticos do Brasil.* I have learned dancing—a bit of fake samba watching *mulatas* on TV shows from Rio in my boring but lovely hometown, Uberaba.

Sabe o quê? Do you know what? I was told the small cities in Minas Gerais are a bit similar to England. People say the Minas Gerais people are *reservado, tradicional e quieto*. Those comments might be full of prejudice and clichés, but I’ve heard them since I was a girl. I am not that quiet by the way. I also don’t love Uberaba that much. But I cannot pretend that I am a typical Brazilian who loves *carnival, capoeira, and cachaça*. I like contemplation and can be melancholic, as *mineiros* (people from Minas Gerais) are seen to be.

3.4 Estou perdida?

Am I an actor or a performer? Am I a person? Am I a woman? Am I a mouse? Am I an academic? Am I lost? *Estou perdida? Estou perdida sim.* Yes, I am lost. Even more lost since living in Australia. Hélène Cixous gives me a bit of hope when she says that being in love is being lost:

There is a connection between love and being lost. In familiar metaphoric terms, when it's a question of passion, we get lost, we run wild with a panting metonymy, we are lost, all the more so by being helped by the personage posted there to produce objectively being lost: that's the case of Pougatchov, known as The Guide. The guide to getting lost. Guide to the secret (Cixous 2005:119).

That's why I decided to talk about love while trying to tell the story of my life. Love is an important theme for my work. Love is also discussed a great deal in Brazilian music, rituals, and culture. Oh yes, I am Brazilian. *Sou brasileira, sim*. I am Latin. I have to admit it. *Ai, ai, ai!*

Offering 4. Brazilian spirituality and *Little World*

Candomblé, Umbanda e Espiritismo são influências enormes neste trabalho. Umbanda emergiu durante a parte adiantada do 20º século, crescendo rapidamente dos 1960s avante. Não tem nenhuma doutrina ou rituais formal ...

4.1 Introduction

Umbanda and *Candomblé* are strong influences on this work, as is Spiritism or Espiritismo as it is known in Brazil and more eclectic spiritual practices. Umbanda emerged during the early part of the 20th Century, growing rapidly from the 1960s onwards. It has no formal doctrine or rituals and, although there are variations between regions, several features prevail throughout the country. Umbanda, which began in Rio de Janeiro shares some features with Candomblé. Candomblé is a religion of Bahia—particularly São Salvador da Baía de Todos os Santos—which developed from the slave trade in the 16th and 17th Centuries: African slaves blended their religions with those of the colonists and the Indigenous people of Brazil. Brazilian Spiritism has an altogether different history, with its roots linked to 19th Century séance practices in America and Europe and codified into a “science” by Frenchman Allan Kardec. Kardec’s Spiritism involves a belief in the presence and communicative capacity of spirits and in reincarnation and karmic principles (Hess 1994). David Hess groups all three beliefs as *spirit mediumship religions*, those that feature the activities of spirit mediums at the core of the practice.

Both Candomblé and Umbanda are strongly *syncretic*, bringing together Roman Catholicism, African, and Indigenous Brazilian religions, disguising their African roots and deities—the *Orixás* or *Orishas*—using Christian imagery and saints. In the Brazilian context, this term *syncretism* is commonly used to describe the bringing together of features of two parallel religious traditions: that of the Catholic saints with Candomblé’s Orixás (Hess 1994:202). In a broader expression of syncretism, the Orixás of Candomblé and Umbanda are considered by some to be like combinations of the Tarot’s *Major Arcana* (the Fool, the Emperor, the Star, and so on), Greek gods (Zeus, Hera, Hermes ...) and Christian saints (St. Sebastian, St. John, St. Benedict ...) acting as intermediaries between *God* or *Olorun*—the African Yoruba tribe’s name for the Creator—and the world.

This *Offering 4* on spirituality presents an overview of the spirit mediumship religions and their interplay with mainstream religion in Brazil and the Brazilian “psyche”. In addition to the three mediumship religions above, I will also discuss more modern, idiosyncratic and fluid forms. Interspersed in this offering are some of my own spiritual observations and experiences. I begin to discuss how these inform my practice and the work *Little World*.

4.2 Candomblé

4.2.1 An overview of Candomblé

Candomblé is practised mostly in Bahia in north-east Brazil. While many variants exist, the most well-known form is derived from the Yoruba people of West Africa (Hess 1994:196; McGregor 1967:57). Candomblé is complex and difficult to explain. It is sometimes referred to as *Macumba*, however, this is really a generic term for all African religions in Brazil and is often used pejoratively in a similar way to words like *voodoo* or *black magic* in English (Hess 1994:198). Over many centuries, African slaves and their descendants practised their religions by blending them with Roman Catholicism, associating the deities, or *Orixás*, with particular saints or other Christian figures. Orixás have a “functional equivalence” with the Catholic saints: both have anthropomorphic qualities; both are associated with power over the natural elements or particular cultural activities; both offer *personalities* with which followers can readily identify and “establish a strong personal bond”; and finally both assist followers in their pursuit of personal goals in exchange for offerings (Frigerio 1989:39).

The Orixás or *ancestor spirits* are usually associated with natural phenomena such as thunder, fresh water, the ocean, and so on, as well as with mythical ancient royalty (Hess 1994:16). They are also associated with particular personal characteristics, abilities, rituals, music, and colours. In Candomblé practice each person has one main Orixá, who is the *head owner* of the individual, and usually three other Orixás who demand worship and offer protection. Each person has a divine origin, which links it to a specific deity. This divine part is located inside the head. The substance of divine origin expresses the link to a specific god (Martins 2001; Siqueira 1995; Verger 1997).

Candomblé has five fundamental themes:

1. *Belief in God ...*
2. *Belief in Deities [Orixás] ...*
3. *Belief in Spirits ...*
4. *Belief in Ancestors ...*
5. *Belief in Mysterious Powers ... (Talbot n.d.)*

Candomblé mythic stories concern Orixás on missions from *Olorum* or *Olodumaré*, the Supreme Being. The missions are to create and govern aspects of the world and to be worthy of sustaining the worship of a cult following (Augras 2000). In Candomblé, life occurs at two levels: *Aiye*, the world, and *Orun*, which is beyond the real world, but coexisting with all the contents of this one: "Each individual, tree, animal, city, etc has its spiritual and abstract double in Orun" (Talbot n.d.). The myths reveal that in distant times *Aiye* and *Orun* were connected, and people could come and go as they please from one place to the other. However, this order, this connection, was violated, and there was consequently a separation and an unfolding of existence. One Candomblé creation myth says that in the beginning there was nothing besides air. When *Olorun* attracted breathing, part of the air transformed itself into a mass of water. The air and the water moved together and a part became a bubble or a mound-shaped matter, a reddish and muddy rock. *Olorun* breathed life over it and with his breath gave life to *Exú*, the first born, the first one in the Universe (de Moura 2000; Prandi 2001; Santos 1993).

4.2.2 Feminine power

Sexuality and fertility are powerful elements in Candomblé, which rejects notions of a split between body and soul. In the religious events of Candomblé held in the many *casas de santo* (places of Candomblé ritual), the body of each individual is related directly to an Orixá that conceives the sexual organs as a source of pleasure, thus going beyond their simple use for reproduction (de Barros & Teixeira 2000:108). Furthermore, Candomblé ritual is also a stage for the process of reinvention of the notions of feminine and masculine on the symbolic level, due to the multiplicity of sexual roles its mythical model has.

While the aspects of feminine sexuality have been privileged by the followers of Candomblé in Brazil (Augras 2000), feminine power is synthesized by the collective term *Awon Iyá Wa* (our Mothers) among the *Iorubás*, which refers to the passionate term of the "Great Mother": the one and only Goddess who contains inside herself all the oppositions, comprising the full

circle of human qualities and unfolding herself into many feminine deities. According to Carneiro da Cunha (Augras 2000:19), the *Awon Iyá Wa* are androgynous and have in themselves good and evil, black magic and white magic; they have absolutely everything. In other words, they are *perfect*.

In Africa, the festival of *Gèlèdè* occurs to address the powerful *Awon Iyá Wa*. Taking place before each rainy season, its goal is to please *Iyá Mi* (*our sorceress mothers*) and soothe the terrible vengeful power of the *old respectable lady Ìyá Agba* or *Ìyámi Osòròngá*. During this festival, the fear that they will be locked forever inside the motherly body, that they will be sucked by the *frightening vagina*, forces men to temporarily abandon their masculinity, dancing, dressed in women's clothes in order to mitigate the *Great Mother* and assuring the fecundity of the fields (Augras 2000:20).

The anthropologist Judith Lynne Hanna (Hanna 1999:192) reminds us that even though the Nigerian Yoruba society is patriarchal, mothers have positive and negative dimensions and are also considered to be wielders of extraordinary powers. Thus, by paying a tribute to them, men share their innate power proclaiming their masculinity and femininity through visual signs:

When men symbolically exteriorise, through dance, the basic forces of life, they may be affirming their virility and freedom before the presence of the powerful mothers; moreover, they may be recognizing and honouring the power of the mothers, as a means of calming them, allowing the mothers to use their "ase", the vital mystical power, in the benefit of men (Hanna 1999:192).

Reinforcing the ambivalence of these deities, Rita Segato (Segato 1995:428) links the combination of elements that are typical of a patriarchal family—characteristics of the dominant class in Brazil—with clearly non-patriarchal notions of the mythical family of the Orixás, save the existence of relative degrees of femininity and masculinity in each category. This is possible thanks to a variety of expressions of sexuality that are legitimate in the scope of *holy people*, also reunited regarding similar corporeal aspects.

In fact, when you examine "the people initiated, grouping them by orixás, one can notice that they usually possess common traits, both physical and psychological. The bodies seem to have, to a higher or lesser extent, according to the individuals, the kind of intellectual or psychological mark that animates them" (Verger 1997:34). These archetypes correspond to the

inherent, *hidden tendencies* that are conflicting with the rules of conduct and are, consequently, repressed throughout a person's existence. Thus, if an Orixá corresponds to these *hidden tendencies*, its *filho-de-santo*, saint or holy child, will have a *relieving* experience.

Verger (Verger 1997:35) compares this experience with Morelo's psychodrama and concludes that, contrary to a liberating angst process "in a depressing setting such as a clinic", these hidden characteristics emerge in an admiring, fascinating, poetic form, during a "brilliant party"—the Candomblé ritual.

4.3 Spiritism

Pedro McGregor (McGregor 1967) attributes the beginnings of *Espiritismo*, Spiritism, in Brazil, to the work of homeopathic doctors such as the Frenchman, Dr. Mure and his Portuguese associate Dr. João Vicente Martins. The two doctors were committed to charitable work for the poor. In their work they used a combination of homeopathic remedies and a certain "magnetic" *treatment*, passing their hands closely over the patient without touching as they prayed to God for help in the cure. Both doctors created a slogan under which they worked: "God, Christ and Charity" and this motto was in McGregor's view (McGregor 1967:88-89), the basis on which Spiritism was founded in Brazil. McGregor claims that rather than the ghostly phenomena and sensationalism associated with Spiritualism in America and Europe at the time, Brazilian Spiritualism would find its roots in homeopathy and the practice of charity.

McGregor writes (McGregor 1967:89) that homeopathic, neo-spiritualist groups headed by doctors and their friends in Brazil received excitedly the publication in 1847 of Andrew Jackson Davies' *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelation*, a book purportedly written under a trance. The author, a "simple cobbler revealed a quantity of fantastic information which he could not possibly have had of his own knowledge, and proved a testament to his extraordinary powers of mediumship". McGregor writes that colleagues of Dr. Mure, after his return to France in 1848, founded Brazil's first spiritist group and that there is documented evidence of the group experimenting with communications with the dead as early as 1853. These experiments took

place before the publication of Allan Kardec's *The Book of Spirits*⁷ in 1857, perhaps the most influential of all Spiritism books.

David Hess (Hess 1994:11-13) describes the existence of two streams in contemporary Brazilian Spiritism: one having a *scientific* emphasis and the other being more *evangelical*. Common to both streams however is a belief in Kardec's fundamental principles of: "communication with the dead via mediums, the existence of a spiritual body, healing through spiritual energies and the gradual purification of the soul across various incarnations in a process governed by the law of karma". Hess writes that Kardec "taught that Spiritism was a combination of empirical research, philosophical reflection and right action governed by the law of karma and the Christian golden rule"⁸ and that Kardec had "synthesized science and religion, not to mention East and West". While intellectuals favoured the scientific stream, following particularly closely the teachings of Kardec in his first two books, *O Livro dos Espíritos*, "The Book of Spirits" and *O Livro dos Médiuns*, "The Book of Mediums" (Kardec 1859 [1944], 1944 [1857]), grass-roots Spiritists are more concerned with charitable works such as providing food and medical services such as homeopathy to the needy and conducting *passe* and *disobsession* sessions. Hess points at some disagreement amongst Spiritists as to whether Spiritism is a Christian faith with a great many Spiritists considering themselves Christian. Spiritist scholars have argued that a Spiritist may be aligned to any one of many religions and that as Kardec himself believed that Spiritism is the "scientific, philosophical and moral basis for all religions".

On *passe* and *disobsession* mentioned above: *passe* bears a close resemblance to the *magnetic treatment* of Dr Mure and is a fundamental practice in Spiritism. It can be defined as "a Spiritist type of therapy that involves passing energy from a person and/or spirit to a different person. The person who gives the energy is generally a medium, and the energy comes from the medium's spiritual body or from spirits that work with the medium" (Hess 1994:200). *Disobsession* is a treatment for *obsession* by troubled spirits and mediums work to "help them", the spirits, "go on to spiritual hospitals or other places where they can receive help" (Hess 1994:197). The *obsessing* spirits are considered "commonplace" by Spiritists (Hess 1994:2).

⁷ Also published in English under the title *The Spirit's Book*

⁸ "Do unto others as you would wish them do unto you"

4.3.1 Spiritism, a personal interjection

Growing up in an *Espírita* family, on the maternal side, in the town of Uberaba in Minas Gerais, I would be remiss to not give a personal account of Spiritism. Indeed, Uberaba itself is an important centre in the modern history of Brazilian Spiritism, as I will mention.

As young as ten years old, I attended disobsession sessions at my mother's Spiritist centre. This centre is called the Casa *Espírita Andre Luís* and there they hold meetings every Wednesday night called *trabalho de desobsseção*, or in English, disobsession work. It seemed to me at the time to be all about people *berrando*, *xingando*, *chorando* and *rindo*—screaming, swearing, crying, and laughing—and sometimes the frenetic shaking of bodies. The mediums were the *healers* who talked to these spirits, giving out messages of peace and love called *doutrinação*. These obsessing spirits are supposed to have originated in the darkness or *umbral*, a specific place that people with little love or light, but who are still learning and open to grow, might go after death. Many of them are believed to be compulsive smokers, alcoholics, abusive people, perhaps murderers and suicidal beings or women who have had many abortions. It can be seen as a kind of Catholic hell, *um inferno católico*, but with some hope for the spirit to grow in a *spiritual and ethical* transformation.

The *Book of Spirits* consists of one thousand and eighteen questions and answers on all manner of spiritual topics. It was my mother's preferred book and each time one of her children asked a simple question like, *o que acontece com a gente depois da morte, mamãe?* "What happens to us after death, Mum?" or *Onde está tia Horizonta desde que ela morreu?* "Where is Aunt Horizonta since she died?" she would immediately have a quick look in the book and answer us with definitions of body, spirit, *peri-spirit* and *ectoplasm*. Her father was a Spiritist and she grew up among spirits and mediums on a beautiful farm in Minas Gerais.

I always felt that all possible questions about death were answered in the *Book of Spirits* and my Mother's faith was, as I still believe, absolutely inviolable. My faith was finally shaken when I went to University in Brasília. It was like the end of a child's dream and in its place, a huge new crisis developed, *uma nova crise enorme*, about my views on spiritual life, the dead and death. This is not to say that I am not proud of the intense questioning

that Spiritism engendered in my life. In my crisis, I lost most of my faith and found the book simplistic. I observed Kardec trying to codify religion and all the mysteries of life in a simple *scientific* way or worse still, in a way that was complicating something already too complex to be understood. The *scientific* answers appeared more nonsense to me than the inherent ambiguities of the questions: *Por que temos que provar esse fenômeno?* Why do we have to prove these phenomena?

After years, I confess I have lost my faith in almost the entire book, *em quase tudo*, and the *one thousand and eighteen answers* about death no longer convince me. My heart however is still genuinely moved by the beautiful *Espíritos* who are, and were, so devoted to Spiritism in Brazil like Chico Xavier, Divaldo Pereira Franco, Celso Cunha, Maria Henriqueta Fidelis, my grandfather Sabino Lucas, my Aunt Horizonta Horizontina and finally my mother, Antonia Antonina da Silva Reis, or as she is known in Uberaba, Dona Tininha.

4.3.2 Francisco Cândido Xavier (1910-2002)

In Brazil in 1932 it was a year of an “extremely odd event” (McGregor 1967:120). A book was published that caused an extreme sensation, especially in literary circles, and compelled the well-known writer and critic Humberto de Campos to write in the *Diário Carioca* of July 10, 1932:

Francisco Candido Xavier is the name of a young man of humble origin, born in Pedro Leopoldo, Minas Gerais state, in 1910. After passing through primary school in his hometown, he joined a textile factory as a labourer. Later he worked in a commercial establishment, a grocery store, and, as this world was not too friendly, he started to think of the next, by joining the spiritists with the high functions and responsibilities of a 'medium'. Having to occupy himself with the mediocre spirits that in this life frequented the shop he worked in, Francisco Candido Xavier decided to be more selective in the world of the shadows, choosing for conversations with superior intelligences, writers, and especially poets, who had already passed to the other world. Through these conversations, in which the mouth took no part, his new friends transmitted some poems they had elaborated after discarnating, and these the young counter-clerk wrote down mechanically, without any effort either of his arm or his imagination. These spirits were originally Guerra Junqueiro, Antero de Quental, Augusto dos Anjos, Castro Alves and so forth (The Keats and Byrons of the Portuguese language). Called Parnassus Beyond the Grave, the book of Mr Francisco Candido Xavier is very interesting for live poets, although it is a terrible menace for those who dislike poetry, Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate!—there inside, in the kingdom of death, there are poets. And they sing! They sing the same way they sang here, without omitting even the precious language they used on earth. I would fail the duty imposed upon me by my

conscience if I did not confess that, making verses through the pen of Mr Francisco Candido Xavier, the poets of whom he is the interpreter, present the same characteristics of inspiration and expression that identified them on this planet. The themes broached are the same that preoccupied them when alive. The taste is the same. And the verse answers, as a rule, to the same musical rhythms (McGregor 1967:120-121).

Humberto de Campos is “one of the giants of Brazilian Literature, a sharp-tongued critic by no means easy to please”, and he could not deny the legitimacy of style of any of the fifty-six poets in Francisco Xavier’s book (McGregor 1967:121).

The medium, who had not finished primary school and who was semi-literate, became famous throughout Brazil. Francisco Xavier, or Chico Xavier, as he is better known through use of the diminutive for Francisco, lived nevertheless a life very unlike what one would expect of such a famous man. He always refused to accept a penny either from the sales of his books or from any other aspects of his work as a medium. Chico moved to Uberaba after retiring due to an eye illness. He became blind after sometime. For me, he was an important character that used a black wig, had the sweetest smile, wore big sunglasses and who my mother adored and believed in. I remember visiting his temple in Uberaba and seeing many actors and famous journalists that I had seen on Brazilian television. It was crowded. People came to see Chico Xavier from all over Brazil. Uberaba, a countryside town, became famous because of him. Once a week, he spent several hours as a medium, answering requests for medicines from those who had lost faith in the ability of doctors to cure their ills.



Figure 4.1 Xavier from his 1973 CBS release⁹

And who is the physician of the spirit world who fills out the prescriptions that Chico Xavier transmits in trance? None other than Dr Adolfo Bezerra de Menezes (1831–1900), doctor of the poor, famous president of the Spiritist Society. In his Uberaba temple, all the sick had to give was their names with no further information needed. Chico seemed to have the ability to heal millions of people. He has been another inspiration to my life and performances.

4.4 Umbanda

*Umbanda tem mironga
Umbanda tem dendê
Quem quiza conhece Umbanda
Tem muito que aprender*

*[Umbanda has secrets
Umbanda has arguments
Whoever wants to know about Umbanda
Has a lot to learn]*

— a popular Umbanda ritualistic chant

Umbanda originated in Rio de Janeiro in the 1920s as a religion syncretising Kardecist Spiritism, Candomblé, Catholicism and American Indian religious traditions (Jensen 1998:75). It emerged as part of a general

⁹ “Prayers and Messages”. See (Xavier 1973).

modernist impetus, with some versions of the history suggesting Umbanda was created by disaffected Spiritualist mediums that wished to follow a more Brazilian path (Hess 1994:15-16). While its roots were in the Brazilian middle-class, Umbanda soon became a popular religion and it is now estimated that a quarter to a third of the Brazilian population has some contact with Umbanda centres (Jensen 1998:75).

Brazilian sociologist Cândido Procópio Ferreira de Carmargo identifies Umbanda as a continuum between Spiritism and Candomblé with different Umbanda centres mixing the faiths to varying degrees (Hess 1994:29). While a standardisation of practice in Umbanda has been resisted (Jensen 1998:75), adherents of Umbanda believe in three core principles common to Spiritism: a belief in reincarnation; a belief in the *evolution* of spirits between carnations and a “belief in karma, or law of cause and effect” (Frigerio 1989:76). *Umbandistas*, followers of Umbanda, in general accept the “nature/ancestor spirits of the Yoruba, although rarely do the mediums incorporate or receive into their bodies the orixás” (Hess 1994:17).



Figure 4.2 Boats with offerings, Festa de Iemanjá, Umbanda ritual in Salvador¹⁰

¹⁰ The *Festa de Iemanjá* is a phenomenon. Held every year in Salvador da Bahia and attended by crowds numbering three million, people make offerings to *Mãe* or Mother *Iemanjá*, the goddess of the sea. They put flowers, dolls, necklaces, and mirrors in boats and send them to sea as offerings and demonstrations of gratitude.

According to Alejandro Frigerio (Frigerio 1989:78-84) *Umbandistas*, followers of Umbanda, like many Spiritualists, incorporate Judeo-Christian beliefs and symbols into their practice and “are always quick to specify that since theirs is a religion, they are monotheistic, believing in one God”. God however, or Olorun as he is widely known, is somewhat marginalised by the roles of the Orixás, the most important of which in Umbanda, Oxalá, “is syncretized with Jesus Christ”. Some Umbandistas, in contrast to followers of Candomblé make a distinction between Orixás and *Orixálás*, the latter of which are considered “pure energies of nature”. Orixás are considered highly evolved spirits that have passed through this corporeal life and in accordance with their advanced state, have roles and powers similar to that of *Orixálás*.

Beneath the Orixás in the Umbanda pantheon, and still subject to the process of evolution through reincarnation, are the *entidades espirituais*, the *spiritual entities*. Two main kinds exist: the *Caboclos*, indigenous spirits from South America and the *Pretos Velhos*, literally the *old blacks*, the spirits of African Slaves. These spirits, commonly *received* by *pais* and *mães-de-santo* mediums during Umbanda sessions, help needy practitioners with advice and in turn ensure their further spiritual evolution through these encounters.



Figure 4.3 Preparing offerings to Iemanjá, Salvador

Other more polemic spirits, due to their association with witchcraft, are the *Exú* and the *Pomba Gira* (female *Exú*) spirits, *immoral* spirits of more marginalised lives such as those of thieves, prostitutes and drunks. “What they lack in terms of spiritual enlightenment they have in power, and for this reason they are very much in demand for they can be used for doing harm or for undoing the harm that spirits of their kind have done” (Frigerio 1989:82). Spiritual sessions of this sort dealing with *Exú* and known as *Quimbanda*, while acknowledged as indispensable to temple life by Umbandistas, commonly attract accusations of sorcery.

Figure 4.4 Mãe-de-santo with offering, Festa de Iemanjá

David Hess offers a more sympathetic view of *Exú* and *Pomba Gira*, the *trickster* spirits. While they are sometimes associated with Christian Devil, he writes that they “are just very streetwise spirits who generally give down-to-earth and sometimes ornery advice. In short, they are the very Brazilian rogues (*malandros*) of the spirit world (Hess 1994:24 & 197).

In my own experience of Umbanda ritual, I can attest to the provocative nature of entities such as Pomba-Gira and *Exú*. They can be radically sexual, provocative entities and when a medium is possessed by this type of visitor in the *templo* (temple), the atmosphere is very exciting, intense, dense, humorous, perhaps even tense and sensual—they say there are no boundaries to what will embarrass you.



Figure 4.5 Pai-de-santo Raul de Xangô embodying (quite literally) the Exú spirit (photo Mila Petrillo, Brasília 2005)

4.5 Further spiritual hybridity & eclecticism

4.5.1 Mother's milk

Pedro McGregor observes (McGregor 1967:86) colourfully and in the language of his times that the Brazilian gentry practically “sucked a knowledge of magic from the breasts of their Negro milk-mothers”. McGregor relates this to the “widespread toleration and even encouragement of miscegenation” and a liberal education system emphasising the humanities. This, he believes, contributed to the spirit of tolerance and permissiveness that identifies the Brazilian character, his (her) mystic outlook and good-humoured ambivalence towards strict rules and dogma (the Australian reader may perhaps view this as a kind of “mystic larrikinism”!?). McGregor clarifies that the Catholic missionaries who were “in at the beginning” of Brazil’s history were unable to enforce “the rigid codes of their church in the lush of the exotic country to which they had been sent, nor could the padres following them stop the landlords, the white master, from exploiting an easy access first to Indian, then to Negro women, with all the pleasures of the intercourse that followed” (McGregor 1967:88). Consequently Brazilians broke away from the strict rules of Europe and became conditioned to accept wide-sweeping freedoms, freedoms that would be socially intolerable in Europe. McGregor goes on to argue that this permissive and eclectic influence influenced Brazilian intellectuals to develop an open-minded approach absent from their

European contemporaries. As he writes on the Brazilian intellectual and the environment:

He was thus that much more receptive to ideas, attitudes, and suggestions which the Occident might normally dismiss as eccentric and unscientific. The primitive rites of African Negroes and their descendents would be rejected but the Brazilian intellectual would be familiar enough with the magical world of fetichism [sic] in which they lived. He clarifies that Brazil lives impregnated with magic. The medicine man, the feticher [sic], has among our populations a prestige considerably greater than the directors of our destinies-it is necessary to have the courage to confess it. In Brazil, the general average of true Catholics does not exceed ten per cent. There is an extremely large number of neo-pagans and spiritualists in every locality, however small it may be, and a very high percentage also in the cities. Ninan Ribeiro sums it up when she says that the number of whites, mulattoes and individuals of all colours and colour gradations who, in their afflictions, in their troubles, laugh at the power of talismans and fetisheers [sic], but secretly consult them and heed them, is incalculable. Such a link with primitive "animist" religious rites having been established, we see that the miscegenation of races not only has its counterpart in religious syncretism, but also serves as a ridge to the acceptance of a much higher, rational, intellectual, cultured philosophical approach to the consideration of human's relationship with the divine (McGregor 1967:89).

I am happy to acknowledge in this quite Brazilian thesis, that despite his condescending tone and my abhorrence of the language, McGregor's position is a true one. Brazil is still living impregnated with magic despite many people denying their strong links with all sorts of practices outside the Catholic mainstream.



Figure 4.6 One of my earliest performances/rituals—a witch giving blessings

I have heard many stories of intellectuals being deeply engaged with Indigenous and African rituals, as well as variations and hybridizations of those rites. I myself was often involved, first as a medium and, later on, as a researcher and artist. I have seen many university lecturers having and giving consultations and learning and experiencing all sorts of healings. It is part of the culture, although many people might feel *envergonhado*, embarrassed, or afraid to admit it. There is a huge discrimination in relation to people who practise Umbanda and Candomblé in Brazil, even though some of these are extremely well-respected and socially engaged people—especially people involved in arts and social projects—such as Mãe Stela de Oxóssi in Salvador from the temple Ilê Axé Opo Afonjá-Bahia. Her work as a mãe-de-santo is extremely beautiful; and when I had a meeting with her she didn't charge me. *Era uma surpresa maravilhosa*—it was a wonderful surprise, considering that Candomblé usually involves a lot of money for consultations and magic. In general after the consultations they say that you have to do certain things to open your path in life or to block someone's spiritual attack etc. I have at times heard terrible things about Umbanda and Candomblé mães e pais-de-santo manipulating their *filhos e filhas-de-santo* (holy children—or *clients*) in ways that might constitute abuse of spiritual and human power. However, if

we remembered what the Catholic priests did to the Indigenous people in Brazil, we might also scream.

4.5.2 Tia Neiva and the Vale do Amanhecer

In Brazil I have attended, both as a participant and as an observer, many styles of neo-pagan religions and rites—like those of the *Vale do Amanhecer* (Valley of Dawn) in Brasília created by a female medium, Tia Neiva (Aunty Neiva, 1925-1985), who was once a truck driver. She began her spiritual journey having amazing visions and superb premonitions. When I arrived in Brasília, the first thing I did was visit her colourful little mystic city. The temple at the Vale do Amanhecer was full of tiny brightly coloured flags which I found *cafona* (Brazilian kitsch) and wonderful.

Tenho que confessor que eu acreditava em todas aquelas energias, aquelas forces e espíritos mas talvez não da mesma forma que acreditam as pessoas da Vale. I must confess, at the time I believed in all those energies, those forces and spirits but perhaps not in a way people from the Valley believe. I had visited Spiritist sessions throughout my childhood and adolescence in Uberaba but I had never seen anything like the Vale do Amanhecer.

There are approximately 500 residents in the Vale do Amanhecer and according to the official web site (www.valedoamanhecer.com), many of the residents were abandoned children taken in by Tia Neiva. *Deve ser verdade*—it must be true. In Brazil it is very common that mediums are seriously engaged in social work. According to the Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vale_do_Amanhecer), the focal point of the community is the Temple of Dawn, “built of stone, in the format of an ellipse, with a covered area of about 2,400 square meters”. Inside is coloured labyrinthine space, *um labirinto colorido*, with several distinct sub-spaces, each one with its function connected to the spiritual works carried out daily. At the back of the temple, highlights Wikipedia, is a statue of *Pai Seta Branca*, a *pre-Colombian* spirit with whom Tia Neiva allegedly began communications in 1957. The entire Vale do Amanhecer complex is elaborate, with artificial waterfalls, a star-shaped lake, stone staircases, statues of Orixás from Candomblé such as *Janaína* and *Iemanjá*, and grass huts. In addition, there is a Government regulated school, restaurants, an auto repair shop, and a bookshop. Tia Neiva was happy to be herself, to be a *cafona* in her style, and

was able to convince authorities from Brasilia to support her mystical project. I have wondered at times if these authorities were among her clients—as McGregor explained, many intellectuals and politicians (I mean well-educated Brazilians) can be clients of those mediums, who in turn can be extremely supportive to them.

Wikipedia describes the “sect” of the Vale do Amanhecer as having a “sincretism [sic] with elements of Christianity, Spiritism, mysticism, Afro-Brazilian religions, belief in flying saucers, and ancient Egyptian beliefs” and that the robed mediums servicing the visiting clients “consider themselves the reincarnation of an extraterrestrial people, ‘the Equitunas’, who supposedly landed on the Earth 32-thousand years ago, and later returned in successive reincarnations in civilizations like the Hittites, the Jonians, the Dorians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Mayans etc”. Tia Neiva is said to have had the spiritual mission of commanding these people under the supreme command of the spirit Pai Seta Branca.

4.5.3 More Egyptologists

I have attended sessions at another temple in Brasilia that was founded by a couple who worked as mediums with Tia Neiva until she died. When Dona Eva’s husband died, she decided to bury his body inside a pyramid in the *backyard* of the temple. The pyramid is a special place for those people who are highly influenced by Egyptology. I used to go to this place in Brasilia and, each time I entered the pyramid to receive the positive energies I believed were inside, I had to face her husband’s grave. For the mediums, his spirit was always there working with them. Dona Eva gave consultations in a little room inside the temple. I once saw my Doctor there and he said “Hello!” and commented that “this place is simple but has so much strength!”. I was a bit surprised because it is a place generally visited by poor people being as it is in a precarious and marginalised suburb in Brasilia. In another temple, I once saw the Head of a School at the University of Brasilia where I work as a lecturer.

4.5.4 Performing in a Trance?

I was “accused” of being in a trance state during my first performance at the Teatro *Nacional Cláudio Santoro* in Brasilia in 1994. I denied it strongly because, as a new staff member in the theatre department of the University of Brasilia, I wanted to be seen as an artist with “reliable” “academic”

credentials. In retrospect, this was an important moment for me in terms of finding my identity as a performer. The “accusation” and rumours that followed amongst students and staff were propagated by a pai-de-santo called Raul de Xangô, who in reality intended his analysis as a complement. Raul de Xangô is a spiritual practitioner for whom I have a great deal of respect. He has developed a hybrid religious practice centred on what he describes as a “democratising” of Candomblé.¹¹ By democratising he means his own personal liberty in adapting the strict rules of *Candomblé* practice. At Raul’s temple in the Federal District of Brazil (the municipality including Brasília) and in his private consultations he applies a mixture of Candomblé, Umbanda, *magista* (spiritual magic), numerology, and astrology.



Figure 4.7 Man in trance, Festa de Iemanjá

Raul saw me on the stage and decided from there to invite me to many of his temple rituals and many times he did not charge to “throw shells” for me (a divination game of Candomblé called *Buzios*). He presented a paper at the University of Brasília about Umbanda and said to many of my students, who were attending the Conference, that I was probably possessed when acting in the Teatro Nacional in 1994. Many of my students looked at me as if I was a kind of a medium, and perhaps I am. However, I have never felt comfortable with this definition and I do not like the idea of being forced to do mystical performances because I am a Brazilian with this background. I do

¹¹ From a telephone conversation with Raul de Xangô on 19 October 2007.

know however that it has been influencing, enriching, and inspiring my path as a performer.



Figure 4.8 Pai-de-santo Raul de Xangô during Exu ritual (photo Mila Petrillo, Brasilia 2005)

I have mentioned in this Offering 4 on spirituality my *training* as a medium and it has indeed been an important part of my learning as an actor. I have long since stopped this kind of spiritual and physical practice due to my many doubts and lack of faith to be a truly spiritually and physically committed medium. I believe in, but I also doubt, my ability to go into a trance. I know this is an ambiguous statement but perhaps this is part of the complexity and eccentricity of being a contemporary Brazilian performer.

Offering 5. Anthropophagy & cross-/inter-/extra-cultural performance

Canibalismo: uma maneira exagerada de apreciar o seu semelhante.

— Mario Quintana

Antropofagia, *Antropófago*, or Anthropophagy is not naturopathy (!) or autoethnography. Nor is it cannibalism itself.¹² Yes, it is an exaggerated way of appreciating the Other, as Mario Quintana says. Brazilian critic Oswald de Andrade's concept of *Antropófago* (in English, anthropophagy or "cannibalism")¹³ claims that the Brazilian must devour what is foreign and produce something new, originally Brazilian. Rather than totally ignoring the coloniser's biased view of the colonised as a cannibal, anthropophagy adopts the trope of cannibalism to its own use, and with a new twist: the imperative for an intentional digestion of foreign stereotypes to produce a possible model for national identity (Almeida n.d.; de Andrade 1976).

Anthropophagy has strongly influenced my aesthetic choices and comprehension. As a product of anthropophagic thought and of an "impure" Brazilian culture in general, my performance path and conceptual explorations have been influenced by: European theatre, American film, performance art, Spiritism, Brazilian Carnival, *ex-votos*, Brazilian soap opera, Catholicism, TV, Candomblé, Umbanda, Oswald de Andrade, *tropicalismo* (tropicalism), Nelson Rodrigues, Japanese butoh dance, Shakespeare, Absurd Theatre, conceptual art, contemporary performance, and cross-/inter-/extra-cultural performance.

Before detailing some of the characteristics and milestones of Brazilian Anthropophagy, I would like to contextualise modern theatrical manifestations within the broader international framework of cross-cultural, intercultural, and extracultural performance:

¹² Although in Brazilian intellectual circles, the terms *antropofagia* and *canibalismo* are sometimes used interchangeably as they are in the above epigraph by Quintana.

¹³ Note the connection between "Cannibal" and "Carribean"—these were once interchangeable terms: the "cannibal" is originally the native inhabitant of the Americas (OED). In (re-)claiming the cannibal, the "native" (re-)claims identification as an Indigenous "Other". Compare the reclamation of the terms "nigger" and "blakfella", and Japanese Butoh's resistance to Americanisation.

5.1 Cross-/inter-/extra-cultural performance

5.1.1 A world in flux

A invasão, a migração, e o deslocamento da população nos últimos cinco séculos causaram um movimento significativo entre os povos ... Invasion, migration, and population dislocation over the last five centuries have caused significant movement amongst peoples.

Cross-cultural performances developed from these invasions, migrations, and dislocations; in the “West”, *intercultural* performance, and especially its cousin, *extracultural* theatre (“theatre exchanges that are conducted along a West-East and North-South axis” (Lo & Gilbert 2002)) developed, especially in the latter part of the 20th Century. Cultures that were invaded by or added to other cultures developed new and vigorous artistic forms: “the old artistic traditions live with the new ones, sometimes deliberately invented, sometimes resulting from a particularly spontaneous fertile union” (Turner 1982:3 & 11).

Cross-cultural performance is part of any encounter between cultures. The body, spirituality, performance, games, and ritual have long been a point of encounter and exploration within postcolonial societies. Umbanda and Candomblé are complex mixtures of European, African, and Brazilian indigenous cultures; their rituals and performances reflect this. Contemporary Australian performance is a complex mixture of European, Aboriginal, and Asian influences—so complex that it undercuts the apparent solidity of these three terms. As a Brazilian artist with the possibility of incorporating in my creative work Australian performance practices, I have access to a unique, un-investigated, and challenging area of research.

This project generated a performance derived from a unique combination of Brazilian and Australian performance practice—a highly unusual performance combination. It illuminated the power of the theatrical event for disparate audiences, and the performer’s experience of the creative process, while generating a new performance text.

5.1.2 Inter-/extra-cultural performance

Inter-cultural performance work—“the meeting in the moment of performance of two or more cultural traditions” (Holledge & Tompkins 2000:7); “a hybrid derived from an intentional encounter between cultures

and performing traditions ... primarily a Western-based tradition" (Lo & Gilbert 2002:36)—is an increasingly important part of contemporary performance. The number of performance practitioners—theatre artists, performance artists, dancers, and musicians—consciously working *inter*-culturally is huge. *Extra*-cultural performance seeks to replace the tradition of appropriating non-Western performance as an exotic "Other" to Euro-American models with collaboration and exchange. However, Lo and Gilbert assert that "[e]ven when intercultural exchanges take place within the 'non-West,' they are often mediated through Western culture and/or economics" (Lo & Gilbert 2002:36-37). They point to a continuum of intercultural practices ranging from the collaborative to the imperialist (Lo & Gilbert 2002:38-39), and argue for a "hyphenated hybridity" via an engagement with postcolonial theory and a "more sustained systematic engagement with the politics of [intercultural performance's] production" (Lo & Gilbert 2002:49).

In Europe, Eugenio Barba (Barba 1995; Barba & Savarese 1991a) and Peter Brook (Heilpern 1977) were seminal in explicitly incorporating performance styles from non-Western cultures, although both have been accused of colonialist impulses, of searching for a transcendent "purity" lost to Western theatre in the exotic, "a metaphysical quest for a truth that holds everywhere and at any time, irrespective of historical or cultural differences" (Lo & Gilbert 2002:37)

An important non-Western example of inter-/extra-cultural performance is the Japanese practice of Butoh (Fraleigh 1999; Ikeda & Arts Documentation Unit 1997). At first glance, this may appear bizarre, as this dance form is usually defined as uniquely Japanese. But the genealogy and practice of Butoh is profoundly intercultural. Butoh was born of Japanese post-war resistance to the enforced "Americanisation" of Japan that affected every aspect of the culture. Western avant-garde artists hostile to bourgeois morality and industrial modernity inspired the Butoh founders Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata (Holledge & Tompkins 2000).

5.1.3 Australian intercultural work

In Australia, intercultural work has a rich and diverse history. It can be seen in the work of the Performance Syndicate in the early 1970s (Brisbane 1995; Minchinton 2001; Spinks 1985), work that in some ways could be compared with Peter Brook's, and is susceptible to the same kinds of criticism.

However, its work was carried on and developed through the work of some of its members, most notably Andrish Saint-Claire, who integrates new media with traditional cultural performance styles, and William Yang. Saint-Claire has worked with Yolngu and Macassan people to make works integrating their stories and performance styles (Whykes 1999). In *Fire, Fire, Burning Bright* (2002), Saint-Claire worked with the Neminuwarlin Performance Group to produce a Western-style performance based on traditional movement. William Yang has worked in monologue story-telling, photography, film, and performance in acclaimed intercultural performances around Australia and overseas since 1989, including *China Diary* (1990), *Sadness* (1992–4), *Blood Links* (1999), *The North* (1999), *Friends of Dorothy* (1999), *Shadows* and *Flash Bak* [sic] (2003–04) (Yang 1994, 1996, 1997). Yang has explored the personal and political implications of his Chinese heritage; he has also worked with Indigenous artists in a number of contexts.

The list of artists in Australia working interculturally is large, but important ones of relevance to this project include Theatre del IRAA, the Malaysian Butoh dancer Tony Yap, Teresa Crea and Doppio Teatro, Mary Moore and Tomiko Takai, Not Yet It's Difficult, Tess de Quincy and Bodyweather, and Bonemap.

5.2 Anthropophagy

5.2.1 First anthropophagic bites

The Brazilian modernist poet, journalist, critic and novelist, Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954), published his *Manifesto Antropófago* or Anthropophagic Manifesto, in the first edition of the *Revista de Antropofagia*¹⁴ (de Andrade 1988:134). He promoted an overhaul of artistic tastes and extended social awareness in Brazil with events such as the “Modern Art Week” in São Paulo in 1922—an event that included visual art, literature, and music by figures such as Mario de Andrade, Di Calvalcanti and Heitor Villa-Lobos (Jackson 1973:1). The Anthropophagic Manifesto published in 1928 proposed that Brazilian modernism knew how to “ingest and creatively digest” that which came from outside, and this was something Brazilians had known to do “in an intuitive way” before the arrival of the Portuguese (Schelling 2000:58).

¹⁴ Magazine or Journal of Anthropophagy.

According to David George, in the *Anthropophagic Manifesto*, Oswald de Andrade posits the problem of the colonizer/colonized relationship with a now well-known phrase, “Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question” (de Andrade 1988:135), parodying the phrase of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. The sentence crystallizes the style, tone and essential meanings of the anthropophagic idea in its jocularly and in its irreverence to the European establishment, in its suggestion that Brazilians can opt to define ontologically to themselves and, also, their own destiny through the beginning, or Tupi, seeking the true roots of national culture (George 1985:21). The word *Tupi* being the name for one of Brazil’s largest Indigenous groups (Fausto 1999:7).

While this re-examination of prehistory is common to various avant-gardes of the 20th century, David George claims that primitivism of the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* is not so much a question of a return to roots but a revelation of the true foundations of culture and national societies, peeling off the shell of an imposed colonial and bourgeois culture (George 1985:21).

Eduardo Jardim de Moraes in *A Brasilidade Modernista*¹⁵ writes of the impetus for anthropophagy (Schelling 2000:58):

The anthropophagic instinct, on the one hand, destroys by devouring elements of imported culture; on the other hand, it assures their survival in our reality, through a process of transformation/absorption of certain foreign elements. Or in other words: before the colonising process, there was in the country a culture in which anthropophagy was practiced, and which reacted, always anthropophagically but in varying levels, to the contact of new diverse elements brought by the Europeans. It is this anthropophagic instinct which must now be valorised by the cultural project defended by Oswald de Andrade. It is characterised by a tenacious defense of intuition and by the capacity to synthesise within itself the prominent traits of nationality which guarantees the unity of the nation.

Oswald de Andrade, claims David George, points his most powerful anthropophagic weapons—irreverence, joke, insult and sacrilege—against repression of instincts and other forms of censorship, which are a legacy of colonialism. He and other modernists believe that the main forms of Brazilian literary discourse were an imitation of the models imposed by the hegemonic centres (George 1985:30).

¹⁵ The Brazilian Modernist—published in 1978.

5.2.2 Anthropophagy in the theatre—an example

The play *O Rei da Vela*, *The Candle King*, by Oswald de Andrade is, according to George, the masterpiece of Brazilian Modernism, taking the joke of Anthropophagy to the extreme, and devouring any glorification of European colonialism. This play is considered one of Brazil's most political, and was the first application of the anthropophagic metaphor to theatrical language. From the artistic point of view, Oswald employs a whole apparatus of avant-garde techniques: expressionist, surreal, and absurd. George emphasizes that the anti-illusionist techniques in the play remind us of Brecht, although no proof exists that Oswald had any knowledge of the first works by the German playwright or of those by Meyerhold. He also states that the play was written in 1933 and published in 1937, even though Brazilian critics only began to review the play in 1967 with the famous production by the *Teatro Oficina* theatre company. According to George, the play, directed by José Celso Martinez Corrêa,¹⁶ should be viewed fundamentally as an unmasking of Brazilian economic nationalism of the 1930's: with the concomitant vision of a radical view of the class struggle, with the decline of the coffee economy, the fall of the Old Republic and the rise of the New State (George 1985:33-35).

According to the director Zé Celso, Oswald reinvented theatre with the *Candle King*:

We are too underdeveloped to recognize the genius of Oswald's work. Our nationalism lends more easily towards the cult of the obvious without the risk of the discovery of something which shows the reality of our true self ... His play is surprisingly within the more modern aesthetic of theatre and visual art. Super-theatricality, the true overcoming of Brechtian rationalism through a theatrical synthetic art of all arts and non arts, circus, show, second-rate plays etc ... The play is fundamental for the hand-crafted shyness of Brazilian theatre which breathes in the lack of courage to say, and even the possibility to say, what you want, how you want (censorship for example)" (Corrêa 1998:89-90).

Zé Celso says that a production of the "loyalty to the author" kind as in the case of *O Rei da Vela*, demands an attempt to reencounter the climate of violent creation, in a savage state in the creation of the actors, the scenery, the costumes and the music. He says he wants to use the same freedom of creation that Oswald used and that the play "deflowered" the barrier of creation in the theatre showing us the possibilities of theatre as art, as audio

¹⁶ Or Zé Celso as he is less formally known.

visual expression and, principally, as bad taste. He states that (the) "bad taste" is the only way to express Brazilian surrealism (Corrêa 1998:90).

O Rei da Vela breaks with traditional dramaturgy in the sense of refusing the idea of a "pre-idea" about what a play should be: a theatre play, in dramaturgy books, is "attack-conflict-climax-resolution-catharsis, or more or less this, the play being more or less Aristotelian". Theatre "is" this or that way, according to Zé Celso (Corrêa 1998:101).

Zé Celso points out that Oswald forgets or ignores the Aristotelian system. The anthropophagic director suggests that Oswald heads towards an invention of a theatre which is unique, non-linear, a collage. It devours all possible forms of dramaturgy. Zé Celso believes that the theatrical form is always an expression of a content that should quote all that can be quoted and use theatrical and non-theatrical forms: circus, literary, and sub-literary. Oswald's anthropophagic theatre, according to Zé Celso, expresses in this way all that it intends:

He doesn't start from the principle that he wants to use a play to expose linearly a presupposed idea, a theme, a thesis, or whatever, as development of an action. His work is the most modernly open possible, in the Umberto Eco sense ... It interferes in everything, sticks its nose into everything, devours and uses everything. A total impurity (Corrêa 1998:101).

Andrade's only "great loyalty", says the theatre director, can be found in the anarchic sense of understanding of the world, using not only the things, but the artistic and sub-artistic forms through which these things are expressed. In relation to Brazilian dramaturgy, therefore, its great lesson is the courage of creation, the lack of fear of "right and wrong", of "good and bad taste". This results in his inventing his own values in his own art. This does not have any problems in form; it enters with literature, music, conference, speech, second-rate plays, obscenities etc. Everything is language. Oswald achieved in Brazilian theatre what has been achieved in other artistic sectors: the elimination of the limits and barriers of genre, general intercommunication—art placing all its experience of meaning in the world—and the world as an aesthetic experience. In this sense, Zé Celso believes that the creator of Anthropophagy discovers a form of expression which is entirely Brazilian, a Brazilian pop in an era in which no-one talked about pop (Corrêa 1998:101-105).

5.2.3 *Tropicália: anthropophagy goes pop*

Since the 1960s in Brazil, most Brazilians have been exposed to the ideas of anthropophagy through another more popular art movement called interchangeably *tropicália*, *tropicalismo* or *topicalista*—and sometimes, “tropicalism” in English.

According to David George, *tropicália* developed from the success of the reformulation of Anthropophagy achieved by Zé Celso. The movement emerged in Brazil in 1966-67 with the production of the *O Rei da Vela* and with the film *Terra em Transe*, “Land in Anguish”.¹⁷ These were followed by a multiplication of *tropicália* in all art forms: for instance, the paintings named *banana/abacaxi*, (banana/pineapple) by Hélio Oiticica and Antonio Dias, poetry by Torquato Neto, the “idade de ouro” (golden age) by the sardonic and fun TV presenter Chacrinha, and especially the music by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil. During the high point of *tropicália* music, works by Gil and Veloso were considered a renovation and updating of Andrade’s Anthropophagy. David George adds, however, that the *Tropicália* movement lacked ideological rigor and when the *cafona*, tacky or kitsch, element emerged in the works, it was rapidly absorbed by the consumerist culture of the masses (George 1985:45-46).

As a true cannibal, and as part of the Brazilian counter-culture, Caetano Veloso points out that the *tropicália* movement was in opposition to the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil at the time—one “believed to have been fostered by the anti-communist maneuvers of the American Empire’s Central Intelligence Agency”. He continues on the times:

Tropicalismo was to incorporate two contradictory attitudes: one, our approval of the version of the Western enterprise offered by American pop and mass culture, including our recognition that even the most naïve attraction to that version is a healthy impulse; and, two, our rejection of capitulation to the narrower interests of dominant groups, whether at home or internationally (Veloso 2003:7).

Tropicália lasted until 1972 when it was declared officially dead by its main members (George 1985:45) (see also de Souza 1998; Gómez-Peña & Chagoya 1996).

¹⁷ Note: the direct translation from Portuguese is “Land Entranced”.

Offering 6. Guillermo Gómez-Peña

*Ser artista é não levar a sério o homem tão serio
que somos quando não somos artistas.*

*[Being an artist is not taking seriously the
serious man that we are when we are not artists]*

— Ortega (1925)

6.1 When is a Mexican a Brazilian?

Guillermo Gómez-Peña can be considered an anthropophagic artist. He is not Brazilian but no doubt I can make connections between him and Oswald de Andrade. I can see Gómez-Peña singing:

*Why don't you play
The South American Way
You can forget all your cares
In love affairs
In Buenos Aires
Why don't you do
The way they do in Peru
Have a good time while you may
Make love at night, and dream all day.¹⁸*

Carmen Miranda sang this song in opening *Brazilian Bombshell* on Broadway in 1939. The difference between defiant Gómez-Peña and Carmen Miranda is that she was typecast in her career, limited to one character who could not express her rebellion against the model she had to represent: the cheerful Latin, with bad English, the lover of the men, food and nature. I am not sure if Carmen Miranda can be considered an anthropophagic artist since she had no voice to devour the other's vision of the Latin, in the foreigner's vision, no voice to respond in an iconoclastic, modern way. She was a puppet of the Americans and wanted to please them with the stereotype. I made a reference to Carmen Miranda in the La Mama *Little World* performance: "instead of putting bananas on top of my head you sit on them". I also use a toy aeroplane-tricycle as a Miranda-esque headdress.

Enough digression—I wonder, what are the differences between anthropophagy in Brazil and the performance art of Gómez-Peña? I can see some connections:

1. Hybridism
2. Parody

¹⁸ "South American Way" composed by Jimmy McHugh

3. Multiculturalism
4. Provocation
5. Understandable Intelligence (not too intellectual)
6. Colonizer/colonized explorations and critical analyses
7. Identity investigations
8. Dislocation
9. Creation of bodies
10. Cafonice

Gómez-Peña is no longer a Mexican, but he is. He is not an American, and he is not Mexican enough. He lives and performs in the dangerous borders of ambiguity. Gómez-Peña, a Mexican who lives in America. Gómez-Peña uses his own dislocation and feelings of alienation to create his unique and innovative art. His approach is non-linear, and he is free to play with the many models and frozen ideas about what it means being Latin. For example, his Instant Living Museums or living museum of fetishes are interventions in real museums or other venues involving “exaggerated versions of cultural stereotypes in a performative context that” confront critically “a colonialist anthropological view of seemingly ‘exotic’ and ‘primitive’ cultures in order to reveal the absurdity of such visions” (Shapins 2003). He does not reject any of the definitions based on concepts and artistic manifestations. His work is nurtured by the conceptual provocations and aesthetic revolutions he makes with his group called La Pocha Nostra.¹⁹ Similarly the Brazilian *antropofagistas*, anthropophagists, affirm that the strength of an artist in a colonial country is subverting the form. With a good deal of anthropophagical irony, in my Brazilian view, Gómez-Peña devours all the ideas of Mexican identity both from Mexicans and foreigners. Gómez-Peña, like the antropofagista Zé Celso (see 5.2.2), uses everything. Both use the international influences as a weapon and ask the public to co-direct them by shooting (interfering in) their creation.

“My” nun, *Irma Rotina*, is a complete anthropophagical character in the *Little World* performance. She is a hybrid religious creature whose religions and mystic attitudes are so absurd in rationalistic terms that perhaps only a Brazilian or an alien could begin to understand. She literally asks the audience to shoot her. The character’s creation was influenced by Gómez-Peña and Brazilian anthropophagist philosophy and art.

¹⁹ See www.pochanostra.com

6.2 The Dangerous Latin

The spectacle of my own pain and (anti)heroism is strictly reserved for my beloved ones. Why? I am not Protestant, nor do I come from an exhibitionist culture of public confession, like Anglo-America. I am an ex-Catholic pagan, and I only write or make art about myself when I am completely sure that the biographical paradigm intersects with larger social and cultural issues. Thus it is quite a challenge for me to write a book about my life and tribulations as a performance artist, taking on the risk of "confessing" what no one needs or wants to know, and/or romanticizing the already over-romanticized life of a nomadic artist and ending up with a corny book. But since I like challenges (my life and art have often been propelled by irrational challenges), I have decided to undertake this somewhat "autobiographical" project, in the hope that some readers will see their lives, faces and ideas reflected here and there in the multiple shifting (and cracked) mirrors of these texts. I hope to avoid describing my cultural, sexual or political adventures in order to create a place for myself in an Olympian pantheon of anti-heroes. I don't want to heroize/eroticize my oppression as a post-Mexican in racist USA, or as a "Chicanized" Mexican in nationalist Mexico; I have already done enough of that in my earlier books and performances. Instead, I want to reveal what lies behind and beneath the making of performance art, particularly when crossing extremely volatile geographic and cultural borders.

— Guillermo Gómez-Peña
(Gómez-Peña 2000)

According to Gómez-Peña (Gómez-Peña 2000:8) the conflicts and challenges that help define his work and others "increase exponentially" in the context of the militarization of the US/Mexico border, rapid globalization, a "millennial culture of apocalypse ... and the resurgence of virulent neo-nationalisms", and "narrow-minded" fundamentalist beliefs. Gómez-Peña also reminds us that Chicano²⁰ and Mexican artists travelling around the world, particularly the "First World", have a different experience to that of "German or Australian(s)" artists travelling in Latin America. Gómez-Peña argues that the experience of the Latin as "Third World nomads in an ever-shrinking First World is marked by political violence and cultural misunderstandings" whenever any attempt is made to redress "misreadings" of their "(phantasmic) identities".

Gómez-Peña speaks (Gómez-Peña 2000:8) of the risks he and his associates have taken while touring performances; risks to their "identity", their "dignity" and occasionally "their lives". He explains he has learned a lot from these encounters, especially about human behaviour, life, culture and even performance. He and his colleagues have learnt to respond in defence to

²⁰ 'Chicano' means either 'Mexican' people living in the border regions of Mexico-USA and/or people living in the USA with a strong sense of Mexican-American ethnic identity.

aggression and danger with “humour, multilingualism, and surprising performance strategies”.

Gómez-Peña uses performance as “a disnarrative and symbolic chronicle” of the here and now. He considers performance to be about presence and not representation; “it is not a mirror, but the actual moment in which the mirror is shattered”. He and his colleagues “perform as they live, love travel and suffer, everything woven together into a complex, multi-hued tapestry. Traveling both geographically and culturally, becomes an intrinsic part of the artistic process, particularly for those of us who see ourselves as migrants or border crossers” (Gómez-Peña 2000:9).

6.3 Ethnocyborgs

Gómez-Peña’s performances both parody and subvert the strategies of corporate multiculturalism and of what he terms the “culture of the mainstream bizarre”; the media and internet’s sensationalist fascination with everything extreme, with high-definition images of “radicalized violence” and explicit sexuality (Gómez-Peña & Peña 2005:51). In his book *Ethno Techno* (Gómez-Peña & Peña 2005:249) he describes the relationship of this “self-proclaimed” mainstream “with its margins” as “one of voyeurism, of cannibalism and erotic fascination. In this new epistemological relationship between subject and object, between mainstream and subculture, there are no more ethical implications whatsoever—no more guilt, no more sensitivity to cultural difference, no more passionate debates about power and privilege. Ethical dilemmas are perceived as passé, as a black and white film on the History Channel.” In his performances he and fellow artists offer audiences “the sacrifice and the spectacle of our own bodies distorted and exaggerated by the media, wounded by pop culture, eroticized by cultural tourism and, at the same time, distanced, mediated by technology, in the hope of triggering a serious process of reflexivity”. These “Mexican Frankenstein” characters are what Gómez-Peña terms “ethnocyborgs”.

6.4 Religious Metafiction

Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Roberto Sifuentes’ 1994 performance/installation *Temple of Confession* was based on a religious metafiction. Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes “became the last two living Santos [Saints] from an unknown border religion, in search of sanctuary across America”. In a setting of a “pagan temple”, the audience was invited to

"confess to the saints their intercultural fears and desires". By playing on what Gómez-Peña considers romantic Anglo-American notions of Mexican "preindustrial wisdom", the performance and installation functioned as a "ceremonial space for people to reflect on their own racist attitudes toward other cultures" (Gómez-Peña 2000:37). Over the course of two years the Temple of Confession was presented in diverse contexts and in each Gómez-Peña clarifies, the project was transformed to incorporate or in more anthropomorphic language, *devour* local issues and iconographies (Gómez-Peña 2000:36).

Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes created three main "ceremonial" spaces as part of the installation/performance: a Chapel of Desires, a Chapel of Fears and a Mortuary Chamber. The main alter of the Chapel of Desires, featured Sifuentes as "El Pre-Columbian Vato", a "holy gang member" engaged in ritualized actions and in front of him, a church kneeler with a microphone for the audience to confess. Gómez-Peña sat opposite at the Chapel of Fears on a toilet (or wheelchair) in a plexiglass box, dressed as a "hyper-exoticized shaman for spiritual tourists". He describes himself in the performance as a fake or "designer" shaman, a "generic Benetton primitive" making eye-contact with visitors and reciprocal gestures. Gómez-Peña estimates that up to third of visitors stopped to make confessions at the Chapel of Desires (Gómez-Peña 2000:37-38).

6.5 Gómez-Peña as cannibal

It is interesting to make links between anthropophagy and cross-cultural performance. What Gómez-Peña calls cross-cultural performance and ambiguity, Oswald de Andrade and Zé Celso would probably call iconoclastic anthropophagy. Gómez-Peña parodies the Anglo-American visions on the Latin, just as the anthropophagists parodied that of the foreigner. He does not reject the *latinidade exotizada*, exoticized Latinicity, he uses it as a humorous weapon of deflection. Gómez-Peña uses the force of the colonizer: pop art, media, corporative multiculturalism, TV, discrimination and stereotyping as a power. Antropofagistas similarly used parody, clichés, creative freedom and anarchy.

Like a cannibal Gómez-Peña eats his worst enemy to steal his power. The anthropophagical Gómez-Peña explores and exploits the processes of representation and presentation of the Other. This is the dangerous border of

the dislocation and “in between” reality of the cross-cultural performer. At the same it is Gómez-Peña’s self-parody and uncertainty.

6.6 Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s dream inspires my performance:

6.6.1 A Performance Artist dreams of being an actor

I dreamed I was a good actor, not a performance artist, but an actor, a good one. I could realistically represent someone else in a movie or a theatre play, and I was so convincing as an actor that I would become that other person, forgetting completely who I was. The ‘character’ I represented in my dream was that of an essentialist performance artist, someone who hated naturalistic acting, social and psychological realism, someone who despised artifice, make up, costumes, memorizing lines, being directed. In my dream, the performance artist began to rebel against the actor, myself. He did shit like not talking for a week, or only moving in slow motion for a whole day, or putting on tribal make-up and hitting the streets just to challenge people’s sense of the familiar. He was clearly fucking with my mind. I, the “good actor”, got so confused that I ended up having an identity breakdown and didn’t know how to act anymore. I adopted a stereotypical fetal position and froze inside a large display case for an entire week. Luckily, it was just a dream. When I finally woke up, I was the same old, confused, performance artist, and I was extremely thankful for not knowing how to act.

— Guillermo Gómez-Peña
(Gómez-Peña & Peña 2005)

I would like to say the opposite. Or will I say the same? An actor dreams of being a performance artist ...

6.7 Guillermo Gómez-Peña querido, Who am I?

Dear Guillermo Gómez-Peña,

Who am I? Am I an artist, an intercultural performer or a fake?

Josefine, a mouse, tiny, speechless, piping²¹ performer. I hope you enjoy my lonely freedom of performing which is always a bit exciting, quite boring, a bit funny, a bit tragic, a bit chaotic and a bit too much. It is childlike, monster-like at a certain point in the performance because any type of freedom can be self-interested and nonsense. I do not like hiding that ... sometimes I don’t know what to do or to write. I don’t! Não sei mesmo! Do you know what to do every single minute?

Tem alguma coisa na vida que é sempre emocionante? Is there anything in life that is always exciting? Art can be monotonous, very monotonous in fact and often, and that that can’t be monotonous can be altogether too concerned with fulfilling the audience. I think that too much happiness or

²¹ A vocalisation to imitate real singing or music.

excitement increases my feeling of displacement. No, I don't know what to do and I still hear the echo of the voices who called me a Brazilian Performer, or even a Latin American Performer (I both hate it and love it but my discomfort at the classification discomforts me further, because there can be no guilt in being Latin American). I started questioning what the meaning of doing that intercultural stuff was. Guillermo, why did you have to become a chicano in America? Wouldn't you be simply a contemporary performer if you had stayed in Mexico? You had to face your chicanice (chicanoness) and all the prejudice and use all the exoticisms of being a Chicano in America. You transformed that taboo into a totem. You are an anthropophagic performer. I hadn't thought of my work being Brazilian when I was in Brazil either.

On the other hand, I wonder if there is genuine meaning in this type of performance work. Why be inside this black box of intercultural performance? Qual é o significado? What is the meaning? Does it have to have a meaning? Is there anything with meaning in life?

Amor é o mais importante na vida, love is the most important thing in life, I have heard. I am neither suicidal nor upset—I am just thinking/performing. I am not upset at being considered Latin because I am as Latin as much as I am not completely white. I am not that happy at the moment and it has nothing to do with being Latin. I am writing under pressure because I have got lost many times during the PhD process in Australia and now I have 'dead' lines and it perhaps makes my lines 'alive'. Somebody once said that creativity is a huge crazy dog running behind you, following you. I am just playing with words and it is, basically, what I love doing in my performances, with my plastic teeth, my toys and headless dolls with arms, legs and odd objects—offerings to the invisible. They are votive offerings to Santo Criança Bebe Bobo! (The Child Saint Baby Fool!). This Saint não existe, it does not exist, I have just invented it. I am about to invent its salutation: Babobobebe!!! Bobo! (fool!) Bebe! (baby!).

Gómez-Peña, can you please hold me up to be foolish? I am not a viable 39 year-old dark Latin woman. I am sexy. Why? Perhaps because I am Latin, perhaps because I am Brazilian! Ai, ai, ai. Gosh, how shallow of me.

I will always be a nonsensical person no matter what happens. For example, now, I am concerned about my earrings. They are big and hurt my ears but I feel prettier wearing them and writing. This is a performance-thesis. I am typing with big, bright earrings thinking and believing that their brightness helps me to think better and perhaps makes me more intelligent. However, I doubt it. Duvido.

Tenho mais uma coisa a dizer antes de tirar os meus brincos. Tenho que concordar com muitos artistas que odeiam teatro. I have one more thing to say before I take off my earrings: I have to agree with many performance artists who hate theatre. Theatre can be very boring, performance art too, but the wonderful difference is that you don't have to stay there and clap at the end. You can usually leave at any time.

Is it my fault that I get bored of theatre (and it includes of course my own theatre)? Why does art have to be more than perfect and exciting? Why, when plays are very good, do I not trust them and start thinking that feeling really good while watching a play might be really bad. I like playing. Eu gosto de brincar. I know it seems silly and I can be very funny huhuhu (weird) and hahaha (humorous) about many things. Guillermo Gómez-Peña, you encourage me to say all the bobeiras, silly things, that come into my mind!

Beijos (kisses),

Simone

6.8 Gómez-Peña on being Chicano:

If it hadn't been for Chicanos and other US Latinos, I probably would have died of loneliness, nostalgia, and invisibility. Chicanos taught me a different way of thinking about myself as an artist and as a citizen.

Through them, I discovered that my art could be developed as a means to explore and I reinvented my multiple and ever-shifting identities (something that had been unthinkable in Mexico). Thanks to this epiphany, I began to see myself as part of a larger US Chicano/Latino culture in a permanent process of reinvention. I was no longer a nostalgic immigrant yearning to return to a mythical homeland. I learned the basic lesson of el movimiento: I began to live here and now, to fully embrace my brand-new contradictions and my incipient process of politicization as a much-touted "minority"—to "reterretorialize" myself, as theorists would say.

And so my painful process of Chicanoization began. For an entire decade I was asked by Chicano nationalists and hardliners to pay expensive dues, and submit myself to thorough identity searches and blood tests. My desire to "belong" far outweighed my impatience and I waited stoically for my "conversion". During this time I was struck by an existential predicament which caused me to shed many tears, create performances ridden with pathos, and engage in obsessive inner questioning: How to ground multiple repertoires of identity in a country which does not even regard you as a citizen? What are the crucial factors that determine degrees of Chicanoization?

Time spent as a politicised Mexican in the US, or a long-term commitment to our grassroots institutions and causa? Did I ever become a full Chicano? If so, when did it happen? I realize that the space between my remote Mexican past and my Chicano future is immense and my identity can zigzag across it freely.

— Guillermo Gómez-Peña
(Gómez-Peña & Peña 2005)

6.9 When is a Brazilian a Mexican?

Eu sei que ele não me acha exótica, I know my Australian husband doesn't find me exotic and that he loves me as a person, not as a Latin person. *Mas quem sabe?* But who knows, and who am I without my *latinice*?—my overt Latin emotional identity. Diana Taylor, writing on Brazilian solo performer Denice Stoklos, identified parallel perceptions in audiences of her "very Latin American" stage presence, and notions of excess and

untranslatability (Taylor 2000:11); that “Latin America is only visible through cliché” (Taylor 2000:12).

Let’s for a moment forget that I am Latin. *É possível?* Is that possible? How can I re-territorialize myself in Australia? How am I to be a Brazilian and Latin American in Australia? How do I reinvent myself? Am I a Latin American fool? Am I a temporary resident who carries her beloved Brazil on her back or in her hips? How do I feel as *la cucaracha* in Australia? I know I am not Mexican but aren’t all Latin Americans *la cucarachas*?!

*La cucaracha, la cucaracha
Ya no puede caminar
Porque no tiene, porque le falta
Marjuana que fumar*

*[The cockroach, the cockroach
Can't walk anymore
Because it doesn't have, because it lacks
Marijuana to smoke]*

I have no idea about my future as a Latin and/or Brazilian performance artist or sudden and non-trained physical actor in Australia. Perhaps a zigzag or ping-ponging between countries will commence and years on, back in Brazil, I will feel very out of place too. *Talvez eu more entre os dois lugares e tem tanta coisa entre Brasil e Australia, tanta água, tanto vazio, ideias vagas, clichés, amor, fantasia, morte, melancolia, fofoca e silêncio.* Perhaps I will live in-between and there is so much between Brazil and Australia, so much water, emptiness, vague ideas, clichés, love, fantasy, death, melancholy, gossip and silence. In-between the cultures, there is a possibility of reinvention that I am seeking. I did not have a choice and I still do not have. I am *la cucaracha Brasileira, Dona Baratinha* (Madam Little Cockroach). She is a character from a children’s story about a *bonitinha*, cute, cockroach that married a gluttonous mouse who, in the excitement of the wedding party, died by falling inside the *feijoada*²² pot. It is my favourite childhood story. She used to sing *Quem quer casar com a dona Baratinha que tem fita no cabelo e dinheiro na caixinha?* (Who wants to marry Dona Baratinha who has a ribbon in her hair and money in a little bank?)

I got married in Australia even though I only came to do a PhD and nothing more. Is that being Latin American? *Que PhD hein!?* “What a PhD!?”

²² An African influenced pork and black bean stew considered by many to be the national dish of Brazil.

my friend Ciane Fernandes exclaimed when she saw the wedding pictures via e-mail.

Offering 7. Abject feminine characters

7.1 Macabéa and The Hour of the Star

A Hora da Estrela or in translation “The Hour of the Star” (Lispector 1986c) was Clarice Lispector’s last text and has been a huge source for my performance work and thesis, especially since I moved to Australia in 2003. I loved Clarice Lispector when I was in Brazil in my early twenties and had just moved from the countryside to Brasília. I have read *A Hora da Estrela* and watched the movie many times and ended up in tears the last time I watched it in Melbourne after enthusiastically finding the DVD at Readings Bookshop in Carlton.

7.1.1 A synopsis

The story concerns a protagonist Macabéa, a simple *nordestina*²³ who arrives in Rio and finds work as a typist. She has a name that conjures disgust in the other characters, sounding as it does in Portuguese, like “a skin disease” (Lispector 1986c:43). Her impoverished upbringing is reflected in her internal, spiritual poverty and Macabéa lacks articulation to understand her own feelings. She never complains about her life as she accepts things as they are, and she never has courage to harbour hope. She could however reflect “with satisfaction”:

I am a typist and a virgin, and I like coca-cola (Lispector 1986c:35).

Macabéa has a dismal affair with *Olímpico* (a false name invented with illusions of grandeur)—a *nordestino*²⁴, murderer and metal-worker, who derived little satisfaction from their *relationship*, and left her for her buxom *mulata*²⁵ workmate Glória. Macabéa lacked even the sense to know she was unhappy. Finally Macabéa—after losing her job and after visiting a false-clairvoyant and ex-prostitute *Madam Carlota*—does experience a kind of happiness or perhaps ecstasy, trembling all over, “for there is a painful side to a surfeit of happiness” (Lispector 1986c:77). She would meet a man, a foreigner called “Hans”, and she would marry him. Leaving Madam Carlota’s rooms, Macabéa was “a person enriched with a future”. At that moment crossing the road, she is struck and killed by “a yellow Mercedes, as huge as an ocean liner” (Lispector 1986c:79)—Hans’ Mercedes?

²³ Female from the North East of Brazil, a deeply impoverished region of Brazil.

²⁴ Male from the North East of Brazil.

²⁵ A woman of African and European heritage, but in the Brazilian context, a term frequently loaded with notions of sexual availability.

7.1.2 Alterity, instability and hybridity

Estava com uma dificuldade para renovar o meu visto e isso, junto com a isolamento que estava sentindo por fazer o doutorado e o fato que sou uma estrangeira, muitas vezes me faziam sentir como uma Macabea em Melbourne. I was having trouble renewing my visa and this, together with the isolation I was feeling from doing my PhD and the fact that I was a foreigner in Australia, often made me feel like a Macabéa in Melbourne. Am I a Macabéa? Do I perform for myself? Where am I—in-between? In-between what? Am I less important than nothing?

I love Clarice Lispector because, although she often touches the political, racial, identity, and social facets of her “moving characters”, she is not stable and identifiable enough to be captured by these factors. Her writing questions “phallogentric” discourse, gendered definitions, and racialised identities “by blurring the line between them while commenting on the multiplicity of identity brought about by these dislocations of the subject” (Feracho 2005:67). Feracho writes:

A study of Lispector's oeuvre reveals a common theme of tension: always moving between two worlds. The instability and flux of the narrative voices are due to several destabilizing factors found inside and outside of the texts, including the author's geographic and linguistic displacement and the influence of a poststructuralist orientation in her work. Lispector begins from a position of marginality and engages in a constant dialogue with various sometimes dominant discourses, be it on a social, economic, or structural level. In 'A Hora da Estrela' the instability of language and subject results in a self-examination through the structural representation of hybridity in three areas:

1) The connection of authorial and narrative voice established in the "Dedicatoria."

2) The interconnectedness of author/narrator/protagonist ...

3) The textual subversion of masculine and feminine discourses as an authorial subversion and post-feminine critique of her own process of self definition.

The first step to understand the particular dynamics of this dialogue for both the author, Lispector, and the characters in her text is to establish the levels of marginalization and centrality on which they are operating (Feracho 2005:69).

According to Nelson Vieira, says Feracho, Lispector has a certain “biculturalism” due to her birth in the largely Catholic Ukraine to a Jewish family and subsequent migration to Brazil with its endemic Candomblé and

Macumba practices, and this explains the “sense of alterity, instability and hybridity in her narratives”. Vieira also claims that Lispector’s originality “stemmed from a unique style that transmitted a sense of indeterminacy and alterity as well as eagerness to understand the mysteries of existence. This quest kept her grappling with Derridean feelings of displacement and de-centeredness, which are recurring features of Jewish exegetic thought and culture” (Feracho 2005:70).

Feracho writes that in order to escape her feelings of isolation and difference, she used a literary technique common to that of Jewish thought, one harnessing these feelings in a “quest for meaning”, and this drive for belonging was to achieve a state of balance from her inherent position of instability (Feracho 2005:70). Even so, this balance was a volatile one:

For Lispector, the literary terrain became a quest born between an effect of de-territorialization and her insertion into a space at the very limits of the language to which she actually desired to belong. In the tension between the clear boundaries of a geographically referentialized space and the search for a potentially unlimited space that could subsume all creative energy lay the fact that she was a foreigner, trying not to be one yet being one at the same time. Her nomadic transit originates, then, in the habitable zone of conflict that language constitutes (de Sousa in Feracho 2005:71).

Hélène Cixous considers *The Hour of the Star* unparalleled in its “signification, audacity, and invention” (Cixous 1990:145). Cixous writes of Macabéa as being “so little, so miserable, so thin” that she would “not have been useful for anything” were it not for Lispector’s literary attention. Cixous wonders however—hinting at Macabéa’s autobiographical qualities—if it was not the character that had invented the author (Cixous 1990:145).

Cixous points to the multiple listing of alternative book titles in the opening chapter and its idiosyncratic typography:

THE HOUR
OF THE STAR

The Blame is Mine
or
The Hour of the Star

or
 Let Her Fend for Herself
 or
 The Right to Scream²⁷
Clarice Lispector (her signature)
 .As for the Future.
 or
 Singing the Blues
 or
 She Doesn't Know How to Scream
 or
 A Sense of Loss
 or
 Whistling in the Dark Wind
 or
 I Can Do Nothing
 or
 A Record of Preceding Events
 or
 A Tearful Tale of Cordel
 or
 A Discreet Exit by the Back Door

She describes Lispector's signature inserted between the titles as a kind of scream. More cryptically, she asks if the insertion of Lispector's signature signifies the "or" of the text, the "or" of her protagonist, the "mark of a possibility of exchange between equivalents" (Cixous 1990:146). The author's dedication bears the note "in truth Clarice Lispector" and is written in the male voice. "Are there two Clarices?" Cixous asks, and of her writing as a man "All women writers have done it, but with her, it is voluntary, both as game and as a serious business. It is carried to extreme maturity here" (Cixous 1990:148). Lispector writes in this dedication:

*I dedicate it to the deep crimson of my blood as someone in his prime ...
 to all those prophets of our age who have revealed me to myself and*

²⁷ "Scream" is translated as "Protest" in the 1986 English edition of *The Hour of the Star*.

made me explode into: me. This me that is you, for I cannot bear to be simply me, I need others in order to stand up (Lispector 1986c:7-8).

The “prophets of our age” and the text’s reader, according to Feracho, are what support Lispector and constitute her *identidade*, her identity. The “collective connections” with the reader and the “other influences are a necessity to maintain her creative capacity” and the “reader is invited to be an active participant in her texts by stating that the two are in fact one” (Feracho 2005:73). Lispector, in Ferraco’s view, “breaks down the boundary between the author or creator as sender of the message and the reader as solely the recipient of the text or message” (Feracho 2005:74).

Feracho notes the “racial, ethnic, and class alienation of Macabéa and its effect on outside definitions of her identity”. She writes of the narrator Rodrigo S.M.’s “feelings of entitlement” over the story of Macabéa:

It is my duty to relate everything about this girl among thousands of others like her. It is my duty, however unrewarding, to comfort her with her own existence” (Hour of the Star 13). Here the narrator expresses his perceived power over Macabéa’s story as his social right to present the injustices of her life. It is important to look at the reasoning Rodrigo uses specifically at the end of this page. He ends by saying that there exists a general entitlement to exercising one’s voice (specifically about the miseries of life) but follows this declaration not with an affirmation or hope for Macabéa one day finding her voice but rather of his decision to speak for her. The underlying supposition is that she is silenced in society and as such is invisible, even to herself (Feracho 2005:78).

The other alternative titles “A Sense of Loss” and “I Can Do Nothing” can be seen as a declaration by both the narrator Rodrigo and the protagonist Macabéa about “the individual transition from object to subject” (Feracho 2005:80). Macabéa from the northeast of Brazil—a *nordestina*—with a background that she prefers to forget, Clarice from the Ukraine, running away to Brazil and Rodrigo, the *rational* and articulate side of Macabéa and Clarice, two lost, displaced women, who are too close to the object of analyses: themselves. Due to this overly intimate look at themselves, they get mixed, lost and cloudy. They are all together as “one” and this “one” is multiple, kaleidoscopic and hybrid.

7.1.3 The character-actor hybrid

I am an actor who always gets mixed with the character, with the author—I become multiplied. *Eu nunca tive o controle que teve o Rodrigo porque sabia que nos não temos controle no final. Nos todos vamos morrer*

um dia. I have never had Rodrigo's control because I know we have no control in the end. We are all going to die one day. Is it my spiritualistic and anthropophagic upbringing that made me a displaced actor?

I am multiple and hybrid in my creations. I no longer control my background and I lose consciousness if I try to control all the voices and references: such as Umbanda, Candomblé, Spiritism, butoh, ballet, ex-votos, contemporary theatre, anthropophagy, Carnival, and violence. *A culpa é minha*, "The Blame is Mine" about the way this research is (being) shaped. It is a mosaic of me and I despair due to the multiplicity of my many possibilities. I am too close to the object who became a subject and vice versa.

I feel very close to Clarice now, for example, and I am the voice of Clarice, Rodrigo and Macabéa.

Posso fazer nada ou estou perdida e gosto dessa dor: ai ai ai. Criei o Pequeno Mundo de um aluno brasileiro de PhD numa bolsa de estudos em Melbourne. Comecei apenas com um filho que fala português e acabei com um marido que fala inglês. "I can Do Nothing" or "I am lost", and I enjoy that pain: *ai ai ai*. I invented the *Little World* of a Brazilian PhD student on a scholarship in Melbourne. I started out with only a Portuguese speaking child and have ended up with an English speaking husband.

7.1.4 Feeling of Loss, Laziness, and Migration,

As Rodrigo/Lispector observes on Macabéa's upbringing, this *senso se perda*, this feeling of loss is one that we can trace back to birth. For the narrator, she, Macabéa, is vaguely aware of her inability to completely belong to, or to be on an equal footing with, those around her—whether it be linguistically, socially, economically, or even, to a certain degree, racially. As a migrant identified as originating from the northeast state of Alagoas in Brazil, Lispector presents the reader and narrator with an identity for her protagonist that is charged with historical, economic, racial, and social connotations of alterity and oppression. Macabéa is a misplaced *nordestina* in Rio de Janeiro. I am a misplaced *Uberabense/Brasiliense*²⁸ in Melbourne. I type as badly as Macabéa, although my fingernails are cleaner. Am I going to be able to finish this PhD? Is my supervisor going to stop supervising me?

²⁸ Uberabense: someone from Uberaba. Brasiliense: someone from Brasília.

7.1.5 Macabéa as an unknown butoh-Carmem Miranda

In a scene in *The Hour of the Star*, Macabéa fails to go to work one day to stay at home performing in front of the mirror. This sounds sad I know and I myself did just that for months. The result of those pathetic and exciting hours spent in front of the mirror (doing a kind of Latin mouse's contemporary dance training—I will come to this mouse idea later!) in a tiny apartment in Fitzroy North, Melbourne, was the performance called *Little World*—version number one, presented in the South Project (see Section 9.3).

However, in contrast to Macabéa, this character-mosaic is not so unlucky as to die before realising her desires. She divinely desires. She needs. *Simonéa* (Simone + Macabéa) finally and deliberately decides that she will not go anywhere, but stay inside the closet where she sleeps—a kind of moving furniture/house/jumble where she plays with her many invisible friends/spirits/offerings (heads, legs, arms of dolls, simple toys, a collection of fake teeth and moustaches, weird fancy dresses, jackets, huge ears, noses, bride's mouse dresses). On top of the closet there is God named *Tempo* (time). She makes him offerings because she knows she has as many lives as she desires until the end of her project and the final performance. She is too self-conscious to be the performance-artist in the dream as described by Guillermo Gómez-Peña (see 6.6). Furthermore "she" is a post-modern artist who is still linked to her own fantasies of possible Indigenous roots—and by the way she does not want her soul to be robbed by a video camera. She is the self-image and the anti-image. She is a Butoh Carmen Miranda with *tamancos*²⁹ dancing with musical bananas inside the closet. Sometimes she disappears but she tries to communicate with her audience. She always does come back. Is she a spirit? Is she invisible? Is her daily food (coca-cola and hotdogs) fattening enough to make her visible?

She might prefer call herself or the character *Ela* (She). It means that she is "the other" while being herself. She is not "me". She is "She" despite being "me". Is subjectivity also imagination? It is like a simple play of opening the closet and unclosing. She appears each time with a different face/body (mum, daddy, lovers, haters, ghosts, scary monsters, romantic brides, a woman in crisis over turning forty, laughing Frida Kalos).

²⁹ Brazilian women's platform shoes.

It is a semi-autobiographical performance. Everything is somehow true but despite this the character will remain “the other.” We live and we die, but what happens in-between? She is never completely happy but she has some disturbing fun with her uncertainty. Sometimes she *stresses-out* because for example she has a deadline for a performance and the sense of responsibility of becoming something else, that is She, herself. But She has a final doubt: is She an actor?

7.2 Josefine the Songstress

7.2.1 A vulnerable talent

Who is *Josefine the Songstress*? Josefine is a mysterious and refined singer among simple and rude people, that’s who. She is also the protagonist in another *final* text, this time Kafka’s last story (Gross 2002:90) from 1924, *Josefine, the Songstress or: the Mouse People*.³⁰

Josefine has a rare talent among the mouse people. She can sing, and beautifully so, and she has a dedicated though fickle audience. To the mouse people Josefine seems to bring moments of levity with her music—but is it music or escapism? Some, question the veracity of her talent and suspect she is only *piping* the notes. The narrator of the story, himself a mouse person also wonders; he says:

If you stand a good way away from her and listen, or still better put yourself to the following test: if Josefine should happen to be singing along with other voices, and you set yourself the task of picking out hers, then you will invariably distinguish only a quite ordinary piping, standing out if at all by its fragility or weakness. And yet if you are placed in front of her, it is not mere piping; in order to understand her art it is necessary not just to hear her but to see her as well (Kafka 2000b:221).

In the story, she receives a certain protection from the people and yet, Josefine, “takes the opposite view: she believes that it is she who protects the people” (Kafka 2000b:226). Josefine seeks concessions from society in an ongoing petition “to be excused all work on account of her song; all the cares about gaining her daily bread and about everything else in our struggle for existence” (Kafka 2000b:231). Her requests are ignored, for the mouse people “so easily moved” by her performances are, “sometimes not to be moved at all” (Kafka 2000b:231). Like all mouse people she is “sensible” and

³⁰ The text was in fact written “to help finance Kafka’s desperate need for medical care”—from the editors note in (Kafka 2000b).

does her proper share of work, sings as best she can—but she tires of her struggle (Kafka 2000b:232).

Over time, the (mice) people reciprocally tire of her, thinking her lazy. She begins to make threats, on one occasion threatening to limit her performances—removing the grace notes from her song—or at least cutting them short. No one seemed to notice. She begins to feign illness, but still to no avail—and her protests at concerts do nothing to further her cause. She eventually fails to show up for her concerts and disappears. “Of her own accord she withdraws from song, of her own accord she destroys the power she has won over our hearts”. The narrator asks: “How could she have gained that power, since she knows these hearts so little?” Ultimately the mice people will recover from their heart-break as the narrator predicts: “She is a little episode in the endless history of our people, and the people will get over their loss” (Kafka 2000b:236).

7.3 Macabéa, Josefine and the abject

In the washroom at the office she painted her lips lavishly beyond their natural outline, in the hope that she might achieve that stunning effect seen on the lips of Marilyn Munroe. ... The thick lipstick looked like blood spurting from a nasty gash, as if someone had punched her on the mouth and broken her front teeth ... When she went back to her desk Glória chuckled:

- *Have you taken leave of your senses girl? What are you up to, wearing all that war-paint? You could be mistaken for a tart.*
- *I’m a virgin! You won’t find me going out with soldiers or sailors.*
- *Excuse my asking: is it painful being ugly?*

— Clarice Lispector

- *Are you dieting to lose weight, my girl?*
- Macabéa didn’t know how to reply.*

— *What do you eat?*

— *Hot dogs.*

— *Is that all?*

- *Sometimes I eat a mortadella sandwich.*

— *What do you drink? Milk?*

— *Only coffee and soft drinks.*

- *What do you mean by soft drinks?—He probed, not knowing how to proceed. He questioned her at random:*

— *Do you sometimes have fits of vomiting?*

- *Oh, never!—she exclaimed in a panic, for she was not a fool to go wasting food.*

— Clarice Lispector
(Lispector 1986c:61-62 & 66-67)

7.3.1 Kristeva's *abjection*

Julia Kristeva identifies three main kinds of *abjection*: that in relation to food, to waste and to sexual difference (Grosz 1989:73) and from the two quotations above, our Macabéa would seem to have scored the hat-trick.³¹ *Parabéns Macabéa!*—congratulations!

In psychoanalytic terms and in order to understand abjection, Elizabeth Grosz writes, we must examine the ways “the inside and the outside of the body are constituted”, the demarcations between the self and the Other, and the way a child’s body becomes “bounded” as a “unified whole”—“the conditions under which the child is able to claim the body as its own and, through its ‘clean and proper’ body, gain access to symbolisation” (Grosz 1989:73). To clarify, a symbol is an object or action used to substitute for something else—for example, a word can substitute for a thing—and this developmental *access to symbolisation* depends on an ability to gain autonomy from the outside world and upon the desire to communicate what is being experienced (Tustin 1992:135).

Grosz contrasts Kristeva’s notions of the abject with Freud’s claims that civilisation has been founded on a repulsion “of ‘impure’ incestual attachments” (see Freud 1942). While there is a parallel in this with Kristeva’s view that subjectivity and sociality exist only with the exclusion of the “improper, the unclean and the disorderly”, the excluded—or the abject—can “never be fully obliterated”. It is the recognition of this “impossibility” in the subject that generates the sensation that Kristeva describes as *abjection* (Grosz 1989:71-72).

Abjection is what the symbolic must reject, cover over or contain. The abject is what beckons the subject ever closer to its edge. It insists on the subject’s necessary relation to death, corporeality, animality, materiality—those relations which consciousness and reason find intolerable ... Abjection is a byproduct of traversing bodily zones and sensations, those which need to be unified and harnessed in the constitution of the subject according to the norms and rules of a given culture. The abject cannot be readily classified, for it is necessarily ambiguous, undecidedly inside and outside (like the skin of milk), dead and alive (like the corpse), autonomous and engulfing (like infection and pollution) (Grosz 1989:71-72).

The three types of abjection relating to food, to waste and to sexual difference have approximate equivalence in the oral, anal and genital forms of

³¹ Sporting terminology, used particularly in cricket, for three consecutive successes.

sexuality—and reaction to such *abjects* can be profound—commonly expressed in “retching, vomiting, spasms” and “choking” in disgust (Grosz 1989:73). The abject “is an unnameable, pre-oppositional, permeable barrier”, it needs some “kind of control” or, without it, some manageable “segregation” away from the “symbolic”. According to Grosz, a number of rituals perform this segregation separating the “sacred and the profane” and Julia Kristeva’s trio of ‘revolutionary’ terms 1) Madness, 2) Holiness and 3) Poetry, establish connections with the abject that “breach, yet also confirm symbolic conventions”. Kristeva, says Grosz, argues that religion, prizes the subject “from the abyss of abjection” to displace it. In socialisation, “the acquisition of a symbolic place” represses the abject, and that literature, poetry, the arts, are all “attempts to sublimate the abject” (Grosz 1989:77).

7.3.2 Art versus Law, Morality and Religion

Am I looking for abjection or am I trying to purify the abjection? Do my characters seek to liberate the spirit through a sublimation of the abject or are they a vehicle for me to dwell in my own personal horrors? What is the relation between art and abjection? Does performing and writing imply an ability to conceive the abject and to speak its language? According to Kristeva, Religion, Law and Morality are the constructs necessary to contain the “perverse interspace of abjection”. She argues that while not acting as their substitute, contemporary literature (I would risk to say contemporary performance too) acknowledges their shortcomings and absurdity—making “sport of them”. The artist, fascinated with the abject, internalises it and studies its language. The artist acts as a “judge” on abjection, impersonating the law, but is also an “accomplice”—and the same thus becomes true of the artist’s work. Literature (and we will presume other art forms) traverses boundaries between “Pure and Impure, Prohibition and Sin, Morality and Immorality” (Kristeva 1982:16).

7.3.3 The abject mouse

The Brazilian—less accustomed to sentimental Anglophone stories such as the *Wind in the Willows*, with its *Ratty*, Beatrix Potter’s *Johnny Town-Mouse* and numerous sympathetic *rodent-ine* portrayals in film (rabbits are also popular)—has little love for the mouse, or the rat, in fiction or elsewhere. In Brazil, people die each year from *Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome*, propagated by rodent urine and faeces (da Silva et al. 1997) and I know of few stories in the Portuguese language embracing the rodent as a heroic

protagonist. What could be more abject than a mouse?! I rather suspect that Kafka, living in Prague at the beginning of the 20th Century had a similar distaste.

The abjection in *Josefine the Songstress* is one linked to her artistic vanity and conceit:

Nor is this a common vanity, for the opposition, to which I myself half belong, certainly admires her no less than the great crowd, but Josefine does not want just to be admired, she wants to be admired in exactly the manner she prescribes, admiration in itself is of no interest to her (Kafka 2000b:222).

Her vanity resonates with grotesque *mousiness*: This “fragile, vulnerable” (Kafka 2000b:225) mouse with “that small and feeble voice” (Kafka 2000b:222); with her “touchy discontent” (Kafka 2000b:227), fighting against the dissent of her audience “with all the might of her feeble vocal chords” (Kafka 2000b:225) and “with her arms outflung and her neck stretched up as far as it would go” (Kafka 2000b:223). Josefine’s conceit and pretensions are rendered all the more ludicrous because of her abject qualities—their implied malignancy.

Josefine however cannot be held wholly responsible for her deceptions—the abjection extends to her entire mouse community. Her audience has needs too, and is complicit in the deception by abandoning reason:

A certain perennial, ineradicable childishness pervades our people; in direct contrast to our greatest virtue, our infallible practical common sense, we sometimes behave with the utmost foolishness, and it is exactly the same kind of foolishness that children display: a crazy, extravagant, grandiose, irresponsible kind of foolishness, and often all for the sake of a little fun (Kafka 2000b:229).

Kafka has the heart not simply to lay abjection at the feet of the artist, but with her entire community—with her culture. So we can view *Josefine the Songstress* as a satire on both the artist and the role of the artist. While a tension and constant struggle exists between the artist and her audience, they are co-dependents and co-conspirators.

7.3.4 Macabéa—a study in abjection

Where Kafka uses abjection as a device to satirise the artist and society, Lispector’s *Macabéa* is a direct study in abjection. *Macabéa*, as I have said

above, has a name that sounds in Portuguese like that of a skin disease.³² According to Kristeva, the skin is “the essential if not initial boundary between of biological and psychic individuation” (Kristeva 1982:101). Macabéa’s name is itself an abjection—the diseased boundary between Self and Other; at the very coalface of abjection, so to speak.³³

In part one of the epigraph at the beginning of section 7.3, Macabéa’s poorly applied lipstick “like blood spurting from a nasty gash” is a clear allusion to menstruation—a “prime abject” as Grosz says (Grosz 1989:76). She is compromised inside and out:

Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpses, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without ... Menstrual blood, on the contrary, stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual); it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference (Kristeva 1982:71).



Figure 7.1 Cachorro quente brasileiro com molho de pimenta (Brazilian hotdog with chilli sauce)

The hotdogs (see part two of the epigraph in 7.3), washed down with coca cola, and on which Macabéa finds sustenance, have multiple abject and

³² Macabéa is pronounced ‘mak-ka-bey-ya’ with the accent on the ‘bey’. Australian friends tell me the name sounds quite *pretty* in English.

³³ It is interesting to note that her name was in fact a votive offering! Her mother had vowed to *Our Lady of Sorrows*, to give her this name should she survive the first years after birth (Lispector 1986:43).

psychoanalytic qualities—loaded with symbolic and implied references to castration, the ingestion of innutritious matter (ingested pollutants) or of bodily fluids, the cadaver, and perhaps even references to the biblical serpent. Let us however keep this simple, and look at the hotdog as a fast-food “pollutant”: Kristeva writes, the loathing of “food, a piece of filth, waste or dung” as the “most elementary and most archaic form of abjection”; the “repugnance” of which, as experienced in spasms, retching and vomiting, acts as protection” (Kristeva 1982:2). In the epigraph—which details a conversation with a bemused and *abjected* doctor—we see Macabéa has no discrimination in her consumption, and consequently has no abhorrence of the impure or mechanism to reject it. She is at-one with the abject.

The narrator of *The Hour of the Star* mocks Macabéa:

I forgot to mention that Macabéa had one unfortunate trait: she was sensual. How could there be so much sensuality in a body as withered as hers, without her even suspecting its presence? A mystery. At the outset of her affair with Olímpico, she had asked him for a small photograph, three by four centimetres, which showed him smiling broadly and showing off his gold tooth. She was so excited when he gave it to her that she said three Our Fathers and two Hail Marys to recover her composure (Lispector 1986c:60).

Should I divulge that she adored soldiers? She was mad about them. Whenever she caught site of a soldier, she would think, trembling with excitement: is he going to murder me? (Lispector 1986c:35)

Macabéa’s sensuality seems loathsome, distorted and out-of-place. Similarly her attempts to achieve femininity are forced and clumsy, coming as they do from crude observations of films (see 7.3), or in response to the passing comments of strangers. The inappropriateness of her sensuality is due to her incomprehension of that sensuality, and because of her de-sexualised body. In terms of abjection, she herself is a pollutant—or “like a hair in one’s soup” as Olímpico once observed (Lispector 1986c:60). As with Olímpico’s condemnations, the narrator’s assaults on Macabéa are equally damning and relentless:

Lost in thought, she examined the blotches on her face in the mirror. In Alagoas they had a special name for this condition—it was commonly believed to be caused by the liver. The girl concealed her blotches with a thick layer of white powder which gave the impression she had been whitewashed but it was preferable to looking sallow. Her general appearance was grimy for she rarely washed (Lispector 1986c:26).

Coitadinha Macabéa! Poor little thing!

7.4 Me as Josaphine

In the period of devising *Little World*, reading Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Franz Kafka, I received an intriguing letter from my friend Marcela Hollanda, an artist/intellectual/fashion designer from Brasilia whom I met in the University of Brasilia in Theatre Department in 1986. Marcela also collaborated as set and costume designer in my first significant performance work called *Flor* in 1987, presented in a festival called "Cometa Cenas" (see 9.6.16). She wrote to me, answering some questions that I no longer exactly remember, but she responded in a beautiful though provocative letter, presented here in translation:

Yes, I will answer and say what comes to mind without thinking too much about it. Some of the thoughts seem to contradict themselves. I'm going to say what I remember and what I know today.

The oldest memory I have of you, is of you arriving on foot at the department, alongside Marcos Savini. You had long hair which fell down over your face and you were almost always looking down. You were wearing a baggy purple top and black trousers and you seemed frightened, lost: you really looked the part of a simple girl from the countryside, from Uberaba.

Gradually, another Simone began to show herself, both in the classroom and through your solo work. This Simone caused a feeling of uneasiness in everybody but it's hard to put a finger on it. Nobody knew if you were an actress, a ballerina, a performer or simply mad. But, anyway, or maybe because of, each 'strange' work you presented, the big question kept coming up – is Simone marvellous or is she crazy? I'm sure the majority of our friends and the audience at that time in the city asked themselves that question. I know, or used to know, people who felt afraid of you then. But, when you played 'the rose', 'the horrendous beast' and other roles, an eerie silence filled the room which, again, nobody could put their finger on but everyone recognised as a powerful strength coming from deep within. The reviews, published or not, always recognised you quickly but this feeling of unease was always present. The uncertainty of mice, and here, another point comes up. Your small body and your darting, fearful look, seemed, to me, like a mouse cowering in a corner. Not knowing where to go and afraid of all the danger surrounding you.

But, beneath all this, it was always certain that Josefina, Maria Bethania³⁴ or Simone Reis, were certain to sing, to be, to be, also, totems on stage.

Today, as I see time has passed, I think you managed to carry a large part of your strength on stage over into your

³⁴ One of the superstars of Brazilian popular music and sister of the equally famous Caetano Veloso.

personal life: Your transformation was visible to everyone. You became a beautiful woman, aloof, secure, decisive, a fighter and self confident. These were the years with Davi's father, of Davi himself, of becoming a teacher, of facing criticism and of becoming self-assured. And that's not to mention what came after: a Master's, a move, doctorate, English and Australia. All of this in your life as Simone. But, the artist, right from the beginning, always showed this strength which made and still makes others feel bewitched. As Artaud says: in life, there are witches and the bewitched. You were always the witch!

I think Josefina knows she is and, so, others believe it too or, even if they don't, they all feel stunned when faced by her. If she sings, squeaks, whatever she does, it doesn't matter. The important thing is that she believes ...

I find the tale 'A Fasting Artist'³⁵ by Kafka, very similar. I wanted to stage it together with Josefina. The artist also knows who he is. I don't know if you know the tale but, at the end when he's dying and those around him ask why he didn't call anyone to feed him, he replies: Because I have never found any food that satisfies me. This, for me, is a metaphor for being an artist (different, strange) having to get to know yourself first to be able to assert yourself after for everyone to believe in you. This is a sign of the times too: everyone tells us how it is and we all believe them. I don't know what it's like there but you know that anyone here who says that he/she is an actor/actress, is already made, even if they have never done anything or are not an actor at all!

When I thought of Josefina, I actually thought of putting people in dressed as mice. Mice in laboratory experiments for research on predictable and verifiable behaviour. Perhaps it's another game with science, who knows? I know that when I studied psychology for 2 years at CEUB³⁶ we had to sit there, for 4 hours every week, literally sitting and jotting down everything the mice did in a maze. Deprived of food, not deprived, with light, without light ... it was crazy enough to make anyone crazy! I don't remember if the word maze is in the tale but I do know that they—the mice—come out of all the underground tunnels, don't they?³⁷

I haven't reread the text so I'm just talking from memory ...

But, at the time, I think the biggest connection I made between you and Josefina was that of a person who seemed to cower in a corner but, at the same time, someone who had the power to warm others to you when on stage. This was because she believed she was.

³⁵ See (Kafka 2000a).

³⁶ A university in Brasilia.

³⁷ In fact, no.

I don't know if I have helped you here but this is all that comes to mind at the moment".

(Marcela Hollanda, email, 2005 (with permission))

This letter both disturbed and encouraged me to make links between what I had already developed at that time and the ambiguity of Kafka's Josefina. I read the story many times and found it fascinating, ironic, disturbing and tragically hilarious. I realised that I was living in a kind of an uncanny tunnel that would allow me to traverse the borders that separates Brazil and Australia, actors and people, artists and academics, theatre and life, the dead and living, civilized and third world people, white and coloured—*Que maravilha!* How marvellous!

Pathetically, the apartment where I lived was a perfect set design for a "mouse performer" who rehearsed hours per day to convince herself that she was an actor (was she?). I became confused between theatre costumes and my own clothes due to lack of space. I also became entangled amongst my child's toys that were my second best "company" when he went to school.

Is piping something to be considered "art"? In my case, my piping comes from: contortion and doubt; many doubts; infinite doubts; laughter and the necessity to do something else other than "be myself" and function normally in the society, based on the first impression that I present. For example, somebody might say:

She is a woman, a wonderful person, a horrible mother, a good mother, a great actor, a performance artist, an ordinary person, a nice woman, a good neighbour, a bad student, a lovely Brazilian artist, a depressive lecturer, an eccentric, a Latin American performer, a messy housewife, an absent-minded foreigner on a student visa, a wonderful lover, a disappointing lover considering that she is an energetic actor.

I feel identified with Kafka's story because I have been working at the border of life and art. I prefer calling myself a half-character actor and this performance, a semi-autobiographic performance. What is the other half? I have no idea. I think it is not simply a *half* but millions of parts: a carnival of heads with no bodies, sometimes bodies with no heads, no arms, sometimes just tiny hearts, livers, lungs gurgling in the darkness among little candles.

The trajectory of doing this research in a foreign country was a fascinating path that strengthened my capacity to be as lost as Macabéa. I

was happy to have had this great opportunity to investigate performer idiosyncrasies, abjections, and nonsensicality.

7.5 What happens now?

Perhaps this performance and writing will go nowhere. "I want to see the skin of the light" says Cixous (Cixous 2005:184), and I love the freedom of structuring performance through events, like in life—this discontinuous continuity. Can I change the topic a little now? Do I have to explain through signs to you what is going to be the next paragraph? *Com licença*, excuse me:

THE FAKE PSYCHIC MADAME CARLOTA

OR

LOVE

OR

MACABEA HAS MURDERED ME

Madame Carlota is an important character in *The Hour of the Star*. For it is she that gives Macabéa something she has been lacking, *a future*.³⁸ The following conversation took place between the two:

— *I am a fan of Jesus. I am just mad about Him. He has always helped me. Mind you, in my heyday I had enough class to live the life of a lady. Things were easier then, thanks to Jesus. Later on, when I didn't rate quite so highly on the market, Jesus lost no time in helping me to set up a brothel with a friend. That earned me enough money to buy this ground-floor apartment ... Are you interested in what I am telling you?*

— *Very.*

— *Wise girl, for I'm not lying. You should become a fan of Jesus too, because the Savoir truly redeems ... I was poor, I had nothing to eat, no decent clothes to wear. So I became a prostitute. I quite enjoyed the work for I'm a very affectionate woman, and I became very fond of all my clients. Besides, life was good in the red-light district. There was a great deal of friendship among the prostitutes ... The quarrels were enjoyable, too, for I was a sturdy lass and I enjoyed punching, biting and pulling the hair of anyone who crossed me. Speaking of beating, you can't imagine what lovely teeth I once had, all white and sparkling. Alas, they rotted so badly that I'm left with dentures. Can you tell that my teeth are false?*

— *No, Madame ...*

³⁸ Can somebody tell me what will happen *now* in my life?

— *Tell me, flower, am I boring you with the story of my life? No? Are you sure? Have you the patience to wait just a little longer before I start reading your fortune?*

— *Of course, Madame Carlota.*

Finally, after licking her lips, Madame Carlota ordered Macabéa to divide the cards with her left hand. With your left hand, is that clear, my little one?

Macabéa divided the pack with a trembling hand: for the first time in her life, she was about to know her destiny. Madame Carlota was to be the climax of her destiny, the vortex of her life as it was about to be channelled into that voluptuous odalisque whose complexion shone like plastic under the bright rouge. Madame Carlota opened her eyes wide.

— *Poor little Macabéa, what a terrible life you have! May my friend Jesus have pity on you, my child! How awful! Macabéa turned pale: it had never occurred to her that her life was so awful.*

Carlota divined everything about Macabéa's past, and even revealed that she had never really known her own father and mother and that she had been brought up by a relative who had been as wicked as any stepmother. Macabéa was horrified by these revelations. She had always believed that her aunt had treated her badly for her own good. Madame Carlota went on to say:

— *As for your immediate future, my child, that's miserable as well. You are about to lose your job just as you've already lost your boyfriend, you poor little thing. If you haven't got the money to pay me, don't you worry. I'm a woman of some means.*

Macabéa, unaccustomed as she was to receiving any favours, turned down this generous offer but with a grateful heart. Whereupon (bang) something happened out of the blue: Madame Carlota's face suddenly lit up:

— *Macabéa! I have some wonderful news for you! Listen carefully my flower ... your life is about to change completely! And something else: it will change the very minute you leave this house! You will feel like a new person (Lispector 1986c:72-76).*

Macabéa makes a virtue of her worthlessness. Macabéa is a question. Macabéa's goal is much more humble yet at the same time a lot more complex to achieve, specifically because she probably wants to find her own uniqueness. Her effort has been remarkable for its uncommunicativeness. A life of vagueness. A singular state of grace, faith and anti-heroism. That's Macabéa. "What is Macabéa?", the narrator asks after he announces that she is dead. He wonders what was the truth about Macabéa?

He claims that it is sufficient to find out the truth that "she no longer exists" (Lispector 1986c:84). She is gone. The narrator says that the instant

has passed. He asks himself "what is she?" and in an automatic reply he himself answers that "she is not" (Lispector 1986c:84).

The narrator continues:

But don't grieve for the dead: they know what they're doing. I have been to the land of the dead and after the most gruesome horrors I have come back redeemed. I am innocent! Do not devour me! I am not negotiable! ... I try forcing myself to burst out laughing. But, somehow, I cannot laugh. Death is an encounter with self. Laid out and dead, Macabéa looked as imposing as a dead stallion. The best thing is still the following: not to die, for to die is not enough. It fails to achieve my greatest need: self-fulfillment. Macabéa has murdered me. She is finally free of herself and of me. Do not be frightened. Death is instantaneous and passes in a flash. I know, for I have just died with the girl. Forgive my dying. It was unavoidable. If you have kissed the wall,³⁹ you can accept anything. But suddenly I make one last gesture of rebellion and start to howl: the slaughter of doves! To live is a luxury. Suddenly it is all over. Macabéa is dead (Lispector 1986c:85).

Perhaps the final manifestation on death holds a touching message. What Macabéa perceives, Lispector seems to have already acknowledged: "death is an encounter with self". Macabéa's death is a concise, delighted flash or shift. A physical form is phenomenally transformed into "vigorous air" (Lispector 1986c:85). Spiritual forces are at play; and despite the parody in the character of Madame Carlota, there is always a reminder of insight, forecast, and divination in Lispector's characters.

³⁹ As a child Macabéa would kiss the wall in the absence of anyone else to kiss.

Offering 8. Love & Dislocation: Lispector, Cixous, Kristeva and Me

Everything in the world began with a Yes. One molecule said yes to another molecule and life was born.

— Clarice Lispector
(*Lispector 1986c*)

If the Other is in me, we are all foreigners

— Julia Kristeva
(Julia Kristeva in Lechte & Margaroni 2004)

I love you: I work at understanding you to the point of not understanding you, and there, standing in a wind, I don't understand you.

— Hélène Cixous
(Cixous 2005)

8.1 A mosaic

In the early phases of this project, I began to create a “mosaic of myself” in performance. This led me to try to make sense of the many contradictory influences in my life and their impact on my performance. It was a challenge to render the seemingly incomprehensible, aesthetically and artistically feasible; to make them communicable. I wanted to talk about the “inexplicable” the “in-cognoscible” experience of being a contemporary performer in a foreign country; the feelings of alienation, uncertainty, fragmentation, dislocation, invisibility and finally, one of the most incomprehensible issues of all: love.

Love and displacement are important topics in my research, and the views of the French feminist Hélène Cixous came to influence and guide my performance choices and creative embodiments. Reading Cixous and Lispector at the same time helped my comprehension of both, and probably my own self-knowledge. Both writers seem to create a discourse that does not look for answers—and by granting myself this liberty of *not understanding*, my investigations have followed conceptual paths, both new and unknown to me.

8.2 Give me your hand

Hélène Cixous writes:

When I write I ask for your hand; with your hand I'll go too far and I won't be afraid anymore of not coming back. Without my knowing it, it is already "love" (Cixous 2005:97).

In her definition, *love* is “giving one’s hand”. “The hand” is potent and “one” is unmistakably correct to ask for it. Cixous goes on to quote an entry, written in English, in one of Clarice Lispector’s unpublished notebooks:

I want somebody to hold my hand (in Brazilian: Papa the time I was hurt). I don’t want to be a single body. I am outside the rest of me, the rest of me is my mother, it is another body. To have a single body surrounded by isolation, it makes such a limited body. I feel anxiety, I am afraid to be just one body. My fear and my anxiety is of being one body (Lispector in Cixous 2005:97).

I feel moved by the way Cixous writes. It is difficult to “explain her”. Cixous writes poetically even when in academic contexts. She traverses the traditional confines of academic discourse into poetic verbal communication.

Cixous writes on Lispector’s text *A Mensagem* (Lispector 1971a), “The Message”:⁴⁰

Clarice reminds us after Kafka, that we can not hope to receive the message; the person who will receive the message must not expect it; if it is waited for, it does not arrive. One cannot have a voluntary attitude. The message arrives unexpectedly, on condition that it be un hoped-for, and on condition that the receiver be receptive, that he be ready (pron- to in Brazilian). But this is not to be ready like the schoolboy in the morning or like the soldier; it is to be the place capable of receiving, prepared, without being voluntarily prepared, but having been prepared in a good passivity, by dint of looking and of not knowing what one is looking for, by dint of looking and of not knowing what one is looking for, by dint of stamping the ground, of getting edgy, of trampling, of knocking against things without knowing, in a sort of anguished openness, because one does not know what for, without anticipation, without forecast, without prediction, and then the message can arrive (Cixous 2005:157-158).

The final phrase of the text reads *Mamãe, Disse ele* (Lispector 1971a:141), “Mother, he said” or more correctly, “Mummy, he said”. Cixous wonders:

But the message? Where is it? The last paragraph is going to arrive and still no message? (Cixous 2005:161)

Reading Hélène Cixous is as enigmatic and unpredictable an experience, as reading Clarice Lispector. It has been a second journey into the inexplicable of the incomprehensible—an uneasy experience. I wish I could join Lispector and Cixous in having the courage to say: I don’t even begin to understand, and that is why, I also “need a hand”.

⁴⁰ See also in Englis (Lispector 1986d).

There is no message in Cixous, or in Lispector's work. There is love, distraction, and blindness. Both of them have no voluntarism in their attitude. A friend of mine read Lispector and said that sometimes he had the feeling that she talks, talks, talks and doesn't go anywhere—she was walking in circles. I think it is an interesting comment about Clarice: she does *not* go anywhere. She is as shocking and funny as the blind man in her *Amor* who was chewing gum at the tram stop—he chews with eyes wide open, seeming to smile, he never catches the tram. He rattles the story's housewife protagonist, for while he is hopeless, decrepit, and lost, he would appear to be—happy (Lispector 1960).

8.3 Strangers

In an incomprehensible and inexplicable world, Hélène Cixous says that we are strangers:

Lodged, lost in the frail cavity. A single wind for roof, for the two of us. And no one other than the two of us under the windy roof. This wind, haven't we invented it? (Cixous 2005:100)

Wind reminds me of Melbourne and the second person is the Other—the other language, the other culture, the other soul, the other lover, the other friend. If the wind is something that we invented, it might be a clue that we need instability; otherwise we would never feel the wind so intensely. How would humanity be with no wind?⁴¹

Indeed, we are strangers under the same wind. Strangers to the world, but not to "us". Can we separate us and the world? We are strangers together, she emphasizes, and this can only be a comfort. According to Hélène, we share identical foreignness, "each one in the arms of the other's foreignness" (Cixous 2005:100). However, we are beneath a solitary wind-whispering of love. Although there is incertitude, hesitancy, between you and me, the unpredictably of us both is united by a single, gusting foreignness.

Cixous is intensely poetic and it becomes more-and-more difficult to translate her ideas into my own words. I collapse. I have a shower and come back to the computer/mirror. I try to write and am afraid that I don't have the *gust* to keep going. I close my eyes. I try to write through blindness, hoping wind and an abyssal unawareness lend a hand. I feel like memorizing and performing her words in an autobiographical way—an interaction between a

⁴¹ One winter I broke four umbrellas walking my son to his school.

performance practice and research. I am afraid that *Little World III* will go nowhere. I jump. I close my eyes and take another step into foreignness. I miss my language and I feel homesick. I am living (lived) in Australia—and this strange location gives (gave) me a convenient excuse for my feelings of displacement. I say excuse, because can't these feelings exist in any location?

The wind is shaking my apartment and moving my fingers to write. Is the computer a mirror? Is the computer the unconditional other? The foreigner who is in me? Are we together alone under the wind? Who are these intelligent women saying that they don't understand, and yet love?

There are no excuses. I was always a foreigner, even in Brazil. I remember!

Hélène says that "to be strangers together, and trembling in the wind, is the condition of love, the lovers' condition" (Cixous 2005:100). I think I have always lived in this *lovers' condition*. The condition is something we experience from birth—as baby lovers held in the arms of strangeness.

8.4 Baby love

On this idea of young love, Cixous writes a "(silent) declaration of love" to someone she has loved since birth, her mother (Cixous 2005:104). She implies that she and her mother were born together in a "double birth". I find this idea inspiring and realistic. Cixous says "the mother is born of the child's birth" (Cixous 2005:104):

Go away. I love your departures. I give you complete freedom. This is the condition for my being able to hope for your comings, hope, heart beating, hope spiced with fear, fear that is never without hope's élan, contraction and dilatation, this is the rhythm of my organism in love. And the freedom I give you takes nothing from you.

The first gesture that linked us was to have the umbilical cord. Each one for herself: you can go, I'll wait for you. I am not waiting for you: you can come. I'm not (like) you. You are not like me. I don't mistake you for me. I don't think I know you. Leave, my love, you who's just left (me). Say I (Cixous 2005:104-105).

Nothing is without confusion or unrecognition however and Cixous writes on the *otherness* or foreignness of offspring, quoting Lispector from her story *O Ovo e a Galinha* (Lispector 1971b, 1986a):

Inside of her, the hen doesn't recognize the egg, but outside of her she doesn't recognize it either. When the hen sees the egg, she thinks she's

caring for an impossible thing. And, heart beating, heart beating so hard, she doesn't recognize it (Cixous 2005:105).

As with the egg, this ambiguous relationship exists with the child, and Cixous considers, with works of art. She writes of the chicken and of love:

The heart beats because this way of not recognizing is a way of recognizing, she recognizes it without recognizing it. She does not know she recognizes it, but the heart beats. My heart beats from not recognizing you, from recognizing: I don't recognize you. (To sense that I don't recognize makes my heart beat); what makes my heart beat is that something remains non-recognized, that I sense the unknown, that I keep it unknown. This is love. I will never know how I love you. I love you: I don't even know it. You will never know how I love you.

I love you: I work at understanding you to the point of not understanding you, and there, standing in a wind, I don't understand you (Cixous 2005:105-106).

8.5 Lost

Cixous writes that there is a connection between love and the state of being lost:

In familiar metaphoric terms, when it's a question of passion, we get lost, we run wild with a panting metonymy, we are lost, all the more so by being helped by the personage posted there to produce objectively being lost: that's the case (Cixous 2005:119).

The experience of being a foreigner in Australia brought me back to Lispector's texts, and that helped me to translate my intimate, unfolding, and uncanny solo universe into a contemporary performance and conceptual work. A friend of Clarice once described her as a person who gave the impression that she had arrived at the terminal of an unknown city during a transportation strike, late at night, not knowing where to go.

That is exactly the way I felt arriving in Australia: that I was "lost in translation", a *becoming* of Clarice as well as her alter ego Macabéa. Macabéa and the pages from which she appeared were "composed without words" writes the narrator of *The Hour of the Star*. It is "a mute photograph", "a silence: an interrogation" (Lispector 1986c:17).

Apart from her monthly visit to the cinema, she enjoyed another luxury. She painted her nails a bright scarlet red. Unfortunately, she had bitten her nails to such an extent that most of the nail varnish had disappeared, revealing the grime underneath. And when she woke up? When she woke up, she no longer knew her own identity. Only later did she reflect with satisfaction: I am a typist and a virgin, and I like coca-cola (Lispector 1986c:35).

The Typist lived in a kind of limbo, hovering between heaven and hell. She had never given any thought to the concept: "I am, therefore, I am". I suspect that she felt she had no right to do so, being a mere accident of nature ... I have only escaped from a similar fate because I am a writer. Any actions are also a fact. When I make contact with spiritual forces, I find your God within myself. Why do I write? Can I explain? I simply don't know. In fact, sometimes, I think that I am not me. I seem to belong to a remote planet, I am such a stranger unto myself. Can this be me? I am horrified with this encounter with myself. As I have already said, the girl from the northeast did not believe in death. She couldn't believe in death—after all—was she not alive? She had long since forgotten the names of her father and mother, for her aunt had never mentioned them (Lispector 1986c:36).

My own identity as a typist is slightly more accessible, although drifting. I go to the movies often and usually drink chinoto, not coca-cola. Movies gave me comfort over the long-lasting, windy Melbourne winters, and in Carlton, I felt connected to my Italian background. I had the vague impression that I had found a lost home—something that had vanished, somewhere else, in someone else's memory. Perhaps something my grandmother lost.

Many Brazilians I met in Australia were grateful that they had migrated and are able to have a better life. The most common reasons to leave Brazil are: unemployment, poverty, and violence—sometimes, people migrate because they are wealthy and cannot cope with the violence in Brazil.

My situation in Australia was temporary; I was a person in transit. So, the safety, the absence of homeless children, the beautiful public primary schools, the beautiful gardens, the organization, all looked like a temporary dream—a fake reality. A four-year scholarship from the Brazilian Government was a luxury, while at the same time, a long period to be linked to a foreign country. It was a changing experience.

What a challenging journey. How can I begin to explain, or be myself? Was the Other my unconscious, as Julia Kristeva might say? Was my unconscious, this lack of understanding, or this lacking of reciprocal warmth—the lack of physicality that comes to us so easily in Brazilian culture? Was the Other the coldness of death? Was Australia the abjection—lacking as it does the clear abjection we have in Brazil? The "lack of culture" as I was warned about by friends before I left for Australia? The nothingness of a *safe place* with little excitement? The safe place my brothers recommended I travel to?

8.6 I forgot my mother's name: Antonomy? Antonyna?

Reading Julia Kristeva I can identify fascinating encounter-points with Lispector's philosophical/literary/existential concerns: the investigation of the abject, existence, love, singularity, otherness, death, femininity, the abyss. Like Kristeva, Lispector also speaks about the shock in recognizing the abyss between self and Other. Lechte and Margaroni argue however that this abyss is an illusion, even though its qualities are "genuinely disorientating":

[F]or it is based on the subject divided against itself, as manifest by the fact that consciousness cannot integrate the unconscious within its domain. We can say this because it is above all the uncanny that underlines the feelings of malaise experienced by the self when faced with the other (Lechte & Margaroni 2004:106).

From Kristeva's perspective "multiple are the variants of the uncanny: these all reiterate the difficulty I have in placing myself in relation to the other" (Kristeva in Lechte & Margaroni 2004:106; see also Kristeva 1991).

Lechte and Margaroni continue, again quoting Kristeva, to propose there is no Other:

Kristeva says that if the other is in me, "we are all foreigners", and so there is no other as such—or at least no other in an absolute sense (Lechte & Margaroni 2004:106)

Talking about depression, Kristeva implies that *signs* become the substitute for the mother: "The depressive does not want to lose his [sic] object" (Kristeva in Lechte & Margaroni 2004:107).

The depressive in fact resists the return to the self through representation (signs). The mother however has become a foreigner, has become other ... intimacy too is an otherness, a foreign element. We discover a strangeness that haunts our most intimate selves. In fact, we have to make ourselves strangers to ourselves (Lechte & Margaroni 2004:107).

As a performer who always tried to establish a singularity, despite or because of, my many contradictory religious, cultural, and aesthetic influences, it seems to be natural to identify with foreignness, which—in this context—is "in me".

8.7 Love imensurable love

Even before this project commenced, from the time when I started creating solo work, I became very interested in the issue of "love". Actually,

love was always a little obsession for me. In my little world in Uberaba, I listened to love songs. I remember a Maria Bethania album in which she recited Lispector's poems and philosophies about the instant—the moment. I have heard love song after love song, my whole childhood—in the streets of the town until daybreak, the sound of the *serenatas* (serenades). Performing serenades was a habit of my brothers too.

One of my first solo performance characters, Flor (the eponymous protagonist), was similar to a child imitating a mother—and I soon became astounded how an elegant mother such as mine, could prove such a complex and ambiguous source of inspiration. The performance was about the ambiguity of a mother's love—the creative and destructive qualities. Flor was in doubt as to whether she loved her doll or whether she wanted to kill it.



Figure 8.1 LP including Bethânia's version of Carinhoso

With a clear Butoh influence, the body of Flor was in constant motion, contorting into sometimes comic gestures. It was a body undergoing many *becomings* (see Deleuze 2002:232-309)—becoming-animal, becoming-flower, becoming-dead, becoming-monster. One instant was a torso with no arms: just a torso, a head and two hands, writhing in flux. *Flor* was choreographed to Maria Bethânia's version of the song *Carinhoso* by Pixinguinha (see

Bethânia 1968)—and it was in fact the cover-art of the LP (Figure 8.1) that inspired the *armless hand* movements in the performance. *Carinhoso* is a song about unrequited love and about a character's heart *not understanding* why it feels moved by love. The heart cannot understand and it cannot communicate.⁴²

Interestingly Julia Kristeva says:

Love at first sight, wild love, immensurable love, fiery love ... Trying to talk about it seems to me different from living it, but no less troublesome and delightfully intoxicating. Does this sound ridiculous? It is mad. No doubt the risk of a discourse of love, of a lover's discourse, comes mainly from uncertainty as to its object. Indeed, what are we talking about? ... We were trying to decide if, when speaking of love, we spoke of the same thing. And of what thing? When we said we were in love, did we reveal to our lovers the true purport of our passions? We weren't sure; for when they in turn declared themselves in love with us we were never sure what that meant exactly, to them. Perhaps the naiveté of that debate conceals a metaphysical profundity—or at least a linguistic one. Beyond the revelation—yet another one—of the abyss separating sexes, such questioning hints that love would, in any case, be solitary because incommunicable (Kristeva 1987:2-3).

The character of Flor is revisited in *Little World III* and is discussed again in section 9.6.16.

8.8 Some letters: why letters?

I wrote letters to the authors that inspired this project—letters to Lispector, to Kafka, to Cixous and Kristeva. I include two of them here. Letters to Lispector? How did I come to this? Why?

Because I was travelling, and when you travel you write letters to tell lies. You can be more risky and imagine yourself, your culture, and country in any context. You can behave as a small woman (*pode ser invocada*) if you like, or you can be courageous. Because I never wanted to be half-dead, or performing as someone I am not, in any social, political, poetic context. Because this exegesis is not supposed to be impersonal and scientific, or cold. This exegesis doesn't need to be convincing.

I am always taking certain risks, like Macabéa. Imagine if Macabéa wrote letters to her family and friends. How would they be? I feel a bit like Macabéa, who went to the movies to make sure that she existed. All those letters made feel alive. I exist. In Melbourne I was surrounded by those

⁴² Some of the lyrics are reproduced in the final *Little World* script. See 10.12.

invisible incredible people: Hélène Cixous, Clarice Lispector, Julia Kristeva, Kafka. They are all displaced *weirdoes*. I felt close to them because ... because ... because we are all foreigners. It made us close to one another. Does it sound too intimate? This is the question! Do I sound too personal? That is the question! Is this intelligent and complicated enough to be a thesis? What is my future Madame Carlota? Am I going to be a doctor or will I be crushed under the wheels of Han's Mercedes? I loved Melbourne's long winters (I have started lying already) and my invisible friends, wandering spirits. They were practically imperceptible, near and far, chicken and egg, horse and cart, dog and bone. My heart beat.

Really, I don't know why I end up writing letters to them—perhaps because I was in such revolt that it increased my capacity to fantasize. Good morning Hélène! See you later Clarice—have a good one!

Because "I didn't have" anything, and by accepting "not having", I was capable of love. As a foreigner, it was easier to fantasize about "me". Who is me?!—I know, I know, "who am I", but you see my point?

I decided to write letters not because I was going mad but because I enjoy telepathic communication and it doesn't matter what kind of contact you have, or with whom (artists, cities, chickens, mice, philosophers, spirits, kangaroos, curators, araras). Any type of communication is worth it. Good night Julia! Good morning Laura (the chicken)! See you in the cinema Macabéa with vovó Gercina and Hélène! Just in case we miss each other, can we have a coca cola before the movie starts?! We love coca cola more and more. Lately we have been enjoying hotdogs too. Our hearts beat in accompanied solitude. Are we real or are we an assortment of ducks?

8.8.1 To Clarice

Dear Clarice

Eu vou escrever em português. It means I am going to write in Portuguese, like you. I admire you because you never wrote in any other language other than Portuguese even though you knew the uncanny languages. I discovered that you learned English, Yiddish and Hebrew. I am proud of you! And I will stop translating one day. Vou apenas sentir. I will just feel. At the moment, I still have to try to translate. It is part of the deal of being a researcher. Is it? Like a chicken, I take care of the egg without knowing why. I am a chicken trying to translate. Am I a chicken wearing glasses? I am Josefina the singer. Like me, she believed she was a performer, and did her best.

Now though, I have to convince you that I am a writer. Everybody is going to believe it, the way Josefine convinced all the other rats of Brasilia.

Attention to all the rats of Brasilia: I am a hard worker, a serious lecturer and not a very serious actor at all, even if I am doing a PhD. I don't and I won't take myself too seriously. If I take myself too seriously it would be the end of Josefine-the-performer. My heart will stop beating and I don't want to die.

Clarice, sorry if I sound too intimate, too close. José Celso Martinez Correa—the antropofago—said in a visit to Brasilia that he doesn't respect anybody. Do you? You and Hilda Hilst are considered the Brazilian Kafkas. I don't want to sound like a journalist in an interview. First, I have to remember that you are dead. I am talking to someone dead. I have a question:

Clarice, did you ever feel proud with this "Brazilian Kafka" label?

[Clarice doesn't respond]

I am talking to your dead body, your skeleton. Where are you? Horror! It is a horror movie! I intend to be melodramatic. Now I am not melodramatic anymore. I am a performer, writing. Can you see my face? I am serious. Can you understand the many meanings of my body's expression? She sighs. She is my collaborator. We lived in Brasilia many centuries ago. Now we are in different locations.

I am sure, Clarice, you were my relative, back when we were living in Brasilia, and before the band of fugitives, who would not be accepted in any other place, discovered Brasilia. They had nothing to lose. Yes, they occupied the houses which were in ruins and multiplied, thus forming a human race which was much given to contemplation. I am concerned about what you have pointed out: the city was built without any escape-route for rats. That is why Josefine has developed her career in Brasilia. She had to stay there and enjoy life the best she could according to her reality. Josefine is down to earth.

I tea mo. I meant "I love you" but Microsoft Word corrected it automatically and instead of "te" turned it into tea. Instead of "amo", it put mo. "Eu cha mo". It is funny! "I call you" would be the translation back into Portuguese. Is love a call? Clarice, I performed "The Egg and the Chicken"⁴³ when I was very skinny and macrobiotic. I hadn't had an orgasm yet at that point—I was still young. At least I believe that I hadn't had one and that I should improve. I was a bit concerned about that. I tried to perform the chicken and devised a singular way of walking like a chicken. In the end, I made an omelette on the stage. I could actually feel the invisibility of the egg and the whiteness that you mentioned. I didn't like the performance because I tried to

⁴³ See (Lispector 1986a).

translate you into acting-performing and couldn't make it "expressive". I tried to pronounce the word "Egg" and got very red in the face due to the huge effort that I made. I liked this part. Remember when you said: the chicken tries hard to pronounce the word "ovo" which means "egg"? Ovo made my mouth very circular. Did you have this bizarre intention? You helped me to make one of the most inexpressive performances of my life. Thank you so much. I was sick of my expressiveness. Some friends mentioned that it was a failure and I agreed. You are the anti-acting writer. Actors are so blind, right? It is vital to be. Don't you think actors are too expressive sometimes? I performed against expressiveness and it was very hard trying to disappear like an egg. The egg is the lack of knowledge and I was too young to value the joy of lack of ignorance. I was a chicken who thought she had the right to have a lover. Do you remember when I was a body? I understand now when you mentioned about the many bodies that you left behind. Brasilia is exactly what you said. Sometimes, I consider myself from Brasilia but, if I die, I think I will be buried in Uberaba. I might die in Melbourne and it would be too much traveling to Brazil as a corpse! That would be an irony. This is uncanny. Death is uncanny. Corpse as abject?

I admire those people who decide everything they want before they die. Those people are very down-to-earth. You know they buy their coffin and plot of land in the graveyard. Some ask to be cremated. You see, I feel so close to you that I am talking about death. Are you dead? Why did you leave those writings? To disturb me? I want to surprise you too. I will do it now:

Like you, when I died, I opened my eyes and there was Brasilia.⁴⁴ I too found myself alone in the world. There was a stationary taxi without a driver. Clarice dearest, I have to agree that Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer⁴⁵ are two solitary men. Like you I am a witness that in the 4th Century B.C., Brasilia was inhabited by men and women who were blond and very tall, who were neither American nor Scandinavian, and who shone vibrantly in the sun. I was there in Brasilia at that time and I can confirm that they were all blind, like you said. Like Brasilia, I belong to a glorious past which no longer exists. I lived in Brasilia with my family for three hundred years. Yes, more proof that the former inhabitants of Brasilia were blind is that there is nothing to collide with in Brasilia. They all dressed in white gold. Yes. The more beautiful they were the more blind, pure and radiant they became, and the fewer children they produced!

I have to stop now. I feel the quietness of a hot afternoon in my hometown in Minas Gerais. It stops me writing. It is so quiet in Clifton Hill. Oh Gosh!

It looks like Uberaba. Was life quiet when you lived? There are no ants here that I can take care of like you did. That's the difference between you and Hilda Hilst. She set fire to

⁴⁴ See (Lispector 1986b).

⁴⁵ Architects of Brasilia.

the ants! You observed. I like you both. I have to telephone my mother and it might be just an excuse so I can leave you alone. But I will never abandon you because if I do I will abandon the otherness in me. It means me. I am my otherness myself and I am your otherness, yourself. I am an actor. I am an actor. I am an actor.

I am going to die.

And the egg?

Simone.

8.8.2 To Hélène

Dear Hélène,

This is a message to you. By the way, what's the message? Where is the egg? I thought it was the passion according to the cockroach⁴⁶ and not the passion according to the chicken, but I do like this idea. Indeed Hélène... I also, always had this question: do chickens love one another? Do humans love the chickens? Why do we end up eating the loved chicken "Laura"? We eat and cry, but we eat. What is love about?

Love makes one live certainly. But it is accompanied by the cruelty of reality. Love is "not having" is it?!

If we love too much we might end eating, cooking the other for Sunday lunch. You are right Hélène ...

I think I understand what you mean. One day I loved and didn't have. Didn't have what? What can we have when we love? In fact, one can love only on condition of not having.

I want to get the instance of love while writing to you. I hold my breath to try to get something else. I don't see anything. I hold it over and over as writing is something that needs my whole body. I've noticed that I have my feet on the floor. I am afraid that I pretend to be more extreme than I really am. I write with my body specifically with my capacity to move my fingers. Where do the ideas come from? My body is not able to cope with the winter. Coitada! Poor thing! I am in Melbourne. Que ótimo! Great thing! I love Melbourne. It is autumn but it sometimes looks like winter. I like the wind. It is poetic, pathetic ... I used to watch the tempests through the glass door in our house at Praça Estevão Pucci, number 5, Bairro Fabricio, in Uberaba, Brazil. I always liked observing the storms and the strong wind. I was afraid of the lightning like vovó (granny) Gercina. She used to open the book of the spirits during storms and pray. Today was sunny and I really enjoyed the energy that came from the sun. Maybe it is quite obvious to say but I don't mind talking about the weather and my pneumonia. My breathing was not flowing so well when I had pneumonia. I understood that breathing is important. Understanding doesn't change anything though. Every evening I had about four women praying for me

⁴⁶ See (Lispector 1988).

and healing me through their hands. They are my mother's friends. Como freiras, like "nuns". It is at least the way my father used to call them, to express perhaps his disturbance about her being a like a priestess. He never liked that. He didn't believe in God.

When I had pneumonia: Davi slept in the same room with me. When I was taken from Brasília to Uberaba, he was afraid that I might die. He told me that later, when I had recovered. He was 5. You see, I am talking about the egg. In some way, my son. And me: the chicken. I always loved observing the neighbor's chickens in Uberaba. Donna Maria had some, about seven, and they slept under the lemon tree. I was so impressed at how they slept so early in the evening and how disciplined they were being awake early every morning. We have many things to learn from chickens. Sometimes, Donna Maria knocked the door and offered us some eggs. She was an old lady, humpbacked, skinny, fragile and extremely gentle. Sweet but a bit, just a little bit, scary. Perhaps it was because of her gentle fragility. From my window I could see the chickens and watch their movements. I imitated them. I was as skinny as the chickens. Talvez eu também tivesse a vergonha de viver. Perhaps I also had the embarrassment of living.

Was Donna Maria generous through the existence of the chickens? She had the feeling that the chickens were hers. Perhaps because of the chickens, we started talking and became good friends. I think I understand when you wonder what the relationship is between two subjects that are so strongly linked. She was such a good person and the chickens made her even better.

Hélène, ai, ai, ai. I adore your interpretations of Clarice. Yes, what is the relationship between two subjects that are so strongly linked?!

The egg and the chicken are extreme subjects since there is no structure that links as tightly as that of the egg and the chicken. It is so tight that it is on the verge of being erased. When I got pregnant I was afraid that I was going to be erased. Eu entendo a galinha, I understand the chicken. The way she looks at things with those contemplative/sublime/shocked/static eyes. O que pensa a galinha? What does the chicken think? Que sente? What does it feel? It goes on living without knowing when Dona Maria is going to kill and cook it for dinner. In the "A Vida Intima de Laura" (The intimate life of Laura),⁴⁷ Clarice explores the affection between a little girl and a chicken called Laura until the day Laura is killed to be cooked for dinner. I never allowed myself to be attached to Dona Maria's chickens. I knew that they were going to die one day. I watched and named them from my window: the more "grounded" one I called Ana Amelia. She was a hard worker, a great cook and a devoted mother. The one who slept on the top of the tree I named Macabéa. There was a rooster and I called him Ulysses. A rooster called Ulysses!

⁴⁷ A story for children. See: (Lispector 1974).

Is that enough to stop us from loving?

I liked Dona Maria and her visits with eggs.

However, I have to tell you something. One day, Dona Maria died. Ela sumiu, She disappeared. What happened to her chickens? Did they know that Dona Maria owned them? Have you ever imagined a world with spirits of animals who died? Yes, I also imagined chickens flying around Dona Maria and taking her to the spiritual world. I also imagined Dona Maria being killed by a chicken and cooked in a pot with carrot and celery. She was so light and had a beautiful smile. Por quê ela morreu? Why did she die?

It is something I wondered about in my childhood. Animals... animais ... What happens to them when they die? My mother would check O livro dos Espiritos (The Spirit's book). She said once that, "Yes, of course they have almost the same destiny!"

Animals are like humans. There is not such a big difference in the spiritual world. Is there such a difference in this world? I wondered. But I am sure God is not human as Clarice said: "My love, you don't believe in God, because we made a mistake when we humanized Him. We humanized Him because we did not understand Him, then it didn't work out. I'm certain that he is not human. But even though He's not human, He sometimes makes us divine".⁴⁸

This is beautiful and it moves me a lot. Not deeply because I don't like that much this word: deeply. It sounds like a ham-actor. It sounds Latin and exaggerated. Caramba! Am I going the Anglo-Australian way?

What about the South American way? Where are my bananas? Back to the chicken, is it getting annoying? Am I getting paranoid? Chicken. I do like writing the word chicken. It is pleasant. É uma delicia! Galinha. Galinha. Galinha. Ovo. Ovo. Ovo. Egg. Egg. Egg.

Perhaps the chicken does not know that the egg exists. Eu concordo, I agree. If you look at people too closely, you no longer see them; the more you approach them, the less you see them. Yes, it can go all the way with a kiss, and then one does not see anything anymore; at the first stage of incorporation. How does one embrace the egg without swallowing it? That's what Clarice's text does. It gets closer to the egg and the egg suddenly disappears; then it pulls away and the egg reappears. That's what can be called a moment of grace. If one looks at the thing too closely, it disappears; if it is too far away, it also disappears until the moment it reappears. There is a constant passage to the infinite, through proximity or distance. The infinite of proximity and the infinite of distance rejoin and are interchangeable.

⁴⁸ See (Lispector 1971c).

*Is the metamorphosis only possible by a dual movement?
Hélène, você quer dizer a vida e a morte? Do you mean life
and death? Human into animal? Egg into chicken? Dona Maria
into an egg?*

*Eu queria ter conhecido você. I wish I had met you Hélène. My
friend Walter, who is in Paris, found you so nice during your
talk at the Sorbonne that he attended last month. He told me
that I would be envious! Hélène, I am sure Clarice would love
to be your friend. Have you heard that she had a French
accent? Yes, she did, because she wasn't able to pronounce
the "r"s properly the way "we Brazilians" do. Perhaps she is
so close to you that you cannot see her. Like the egg and the
chicken. You said about Clarice:*

***[A]lways this urgency: to make resonate in our century the echo of this
voice that comes from the origins.***⁴⁹

*I imagine Clarice saying, "I am Brazilian", with a French
accent. Her heart was beating in solitude. I bet that
Clarice was in solitude. Your heart beating in solitude. My
heart beating in solitude. I feel that solitude at night and
now, while I am writing. What do you feel when you write? Can
you be seen?*

*Do you feel that you are so close to the reader that suddenly
you disappear? Do you feel that I am too close to you, so you
might disappear? Perhaps I cannot see you. You are just the
mirror and, like narcissus, I disappear the closer I am to
the pool (you). So I die because I never was able to swim.*

*I wonder if we are all real for the millionth time. Are we
real? I know that it is not a new question and I might be the
millionth person wondering about the same question for the
millionth time. I am turning thirty-nine in less than a week.
I feel that I am a bit old. People have said lately that I am
such a youthful person when I tell them my age. It is exactly
what I say to my mother who is turning 80. She told me a
young man said that he saw her as a little girl. Once they
start saying this, I'll know for certain I am no longer
young. I might feel that it is the first time I am turning 39
and it is new. I feel like a baby. I don't like the idea of
being mature, I've never liked it. I've always allowed myself
to experience things with all my unawareness.*

*I had a friend called Karen who liked spinning around the
palmeira, the coconut palm tree. If I write with the help of
the wind, I have to talk about Karen and the coconut palm
tree. Karen and I each had a personal tree that could become
a castle and we became queens just by spinning once around
the trunk.*

*I think I understand when you said that now, "it's only in
the act of love that one finally attains the present's speed,
the intelligent, interior, slow speed, the non-measurable,
precise, unknown speed, that transports us into the
uncalculated, deep, borderless, strangely marine instant—*

⁴⁹ See (Cixous 1999).

because in joy, as we know, we swim—and the instant is joy, more precisely felicity, congratulation, that is to say, joy rejoicing, joy and joy of joy ... in joy, all is forgotten, except an insignificant sensation of glory, it's like a triumph, like knowing what the getting there on time has cost us".⁵⁰

I wonder, am I going to be there on time, Hélène? I am so happy sometimes while writing that I forget that there is something to be achieved in time.

Simone.

⁵⁰ See (Cixous 2005, 103).

Offering 9. Processes—theatrical development

9.1 Introduction

I started this PhD thinking about feminine orixá characters, characters that play vital roles in Afro-Brazilian creation myths and in connection with existential meaning in general. In my Masters research I had investigated connections between orixás and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and I have a long-term fascination with reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable, mixing autobiographical content, with all its Afro-Brazilian spiritual references, with literature and disparate ideas—or in other words *anthropophagizing*/-cannibalising the texts. In theatre, the hybridisation of Afro-Brazilian concepts with that of Western discourse “results in a deconstruction of structures and forms, challenging the characteristic of the spectacle” (Reis 2002). The characters in the myths are typically mothers and often involved in complex love relationships. These stories inspired me to investigate possible connections in the texts of three important female writers Hélène Cixous, Clarice Lispector, and Julia Kristeva

A central theme of the project has been “life” and consequently “love” and I knew these simple themes could embody many characterisations of what it means to be a woman, to be an artist and to a Brazilian in Australia. I had already developed in my career many small performances related to these life-themes, and this research has been an opportunity to understand why these topics constantly reappear in my creative choices. Was however this concern with the feminine, love, and the meaning of life a self-indulgent obsession with my own performance path? Why did Clarice Lispector's novels suddenly appear in front of me in a bookshop in Melbourne? Why is Hélène Cixous also fascinated by Lispector and her characters? What is life about? What is love?

These questions and other impulses made me move the creative process of *Little World*, initially supported and nurtured by the Afro-Brazilian ritual and myths, towards these amazing thinkers: Lispector, Kristeva and Cixous (see Offering 7 and Offering 8). Are we all women in despair? And let's not forget Kafka who also influenced the ideas of *Little World*, particularly in his character Josefina (see 7.2).

It is probably clear by now that my creative process is *not* one of sitting down quietly to write a text, taking it to a rehearsal room to “realize” it, and then performing it. *Little World* grew, like much performance work, through a “messy” process of Gathering, Selecting, Editing, Performing over many months and years. Mark Minchinton introduces his discussion of theatre making processes in his PhD dissertation “Towards a Minor Theatre?”, with an epigraph taken from Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*. Melville writes, “The classification of the constituents of a chaos, nothing less is here essayed” (Melville 1972 [1851]:227-228; Minchinton 1996:11). Minchinton’s epigraph and his entire thesis suggest the elusive “chaos” of much performance making, a chaos that resists easy classification. Taking place in my lounge-room and on stage as much as in a rehearsal studio or in the quiet confines of a typewritten page, my theatre making process is “messy”, “anthropophagistic”, and resistant to classification. Nevertheless, in the following pages I offer impressions of how the three stages of *Little World* developed.

9.2 First south, then west, then east again

Little World had three stages in its theatrical development and for convenience, I will refer to them as *Little World I*, *II* and *III*. The first developmental performance, *Little World I*, which I began to discuss in section 9.3.1, took place as part of the “South Project”, an ongoing arts program in Melbourne, promoting cross-cultural dialogue and exchange across the Southern Hemisphere.⁵¹ I participated in one of the inaugural seminars of the project in 2004, performing with simple costumes and few technical requirements. *Little World II* was performed at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts,⁵² PICA in 2005 and ultimately, *Little World III* was performed at the La Mama theatre⁵³ in Melbourne in 2006.

9.3 Little World I

9.3.1 An African goddess

I was now so much greater that I no longer saw myself. As great as a landscape in the distance. I was in the distance. More perceptible in my last mountains and in my remotest rivers ... For how will I be able to speak except timidly, like this: life is itself for me. Life is itself for me, and I don't understand what I am saying. And therefore, I adore ...

— Clarice Lispector

⁵¹ www.southproject.org

⁵² www.pica.org.au

⁵³ www.lamama.com.au

In the beginning of 2004 I intended to develop a theme in relation to the creation myths of Afro-Brazilian mythology (see Sections 4.2 and 4.4). I decided to depict a world and its beings: Apocalypse, Genesis, a chaotic/organized *little world*—the visible and invisible, predictable and unpredictable, creatures, myths, and the transpositions of my dreams and memories into *toy-beings*. The performance was based on the precarious objects that *She*—the character—plays with. It was like a ghost-child's soliloquy. I devised a creature/myth/goddess/heroine/human/toy that played with the idea of influencing and being influenced by the movement of the world; a goddess that flies and suddenly falls down to the earth because she cannot maintain her fantasies. She fails in exactly the same way Goddesses from Afro-Brazilian mythology do. She falls in love, she loses control. Is she an anti-heroine—an anti-actor? Probably yes: a super heroine of death, playfulness, mess and a magic fool; a super-tiny neutron under the unfathomable laws of quantum physics, becoming just anything, incessantly.

A spinning top was one of the central objects—a little world in itself, spinning on its axis. *She* is somebody/something who created a super-space and disappeared into her little world in a paradoxical ending. If she was a goddess, how could she lose control? If she was so big, how could she disappear among the tiny objects? That's magic! Like a child, she disappears when she believes people cannot see her in the dark of the room, she is hidden by her dress and she only reappears when she turns back on the light. Like magic—lazy magic. My difficulties in dealing with my reality in Australia are ever-present. She drives the scooter "badly". She communicates "badly". She dances "badly". How wonderfully pathetic it can be becoming the *girl from Ipanema*! She becomes so huge, she is infinite; she loves the objects that she plays with; she is an immense landscape.

I find connections between this mobile super-character and Clarice Lispector's words in the epigraph above from the last paragraphs of *The Passion According to G.H.*⁵⁴ (Lispector 1988:173). Lispector, was not afraid of incompleteness. That is also why the name of the project has been *Little World*—because it is about little unimportant but affectionate things; personal things.

⁵⁴ Originally published in Portuguese in 1964 under the title *A paixão segundo G.H.*

9.3.2 The scene and the goddess' genesis

When I remember my grandmother's farmhouse (see 2.2.2); the place was always fun but scary at times, and I wanted to reproduce this *haunted* environment in the performance; the stories and the excitement associated with them were considered part of the daily reality. *She*, heard voices, sent irrational, visceral messages, had visions and tried to materialize her invisible little world: a little hunted house. Memories and actions became the same stuff. She was a mysterious and funny woman and was a synthesis of all my relatives and memories from childhood in Uberaba; my mother, my father and grandparents were elements of the mosaic of this feminine character (see 2.2).

A round room with chairs at the edge; the spinning top in the middle of the room; an old-fashioned, red, child's suitcase, emitting a soundtrack that mixes *Tristão e Isolda* (*Tristan and Isolde*) by Wagner with Nara Leão and João Gilberto. Is this a child's game or a performance? *Estou possuída?* Am I possessed? A creature with enormous 'bee' glasses, dressed in black—a goddess with plastic teeth riding a scooter, and very badly so. I will never be *sporty* like Australians. I will never ride a bike wearing a helmet. *Isso é a prova do meu "subdesenvolvimento" terceiro mundista?* Is this proof of my Third World "underdevelopment"?

In fact, I did wear a helmet with a piece of cloth on top with pearl beads. This represented the goddess *Iemanjá*, queen of the sea and in *syncretic* terms a kind of Santa Maria, but she is definitely not a virgin. She possesses a sexuality which is clearly expressed in the myths—an example commented on by mothers from Santo da Bahia is that Iemanjá had an incestuous affair with her son *Xangô* and she pretended she was dead to her husband in order to try and flee with her lover. Iemanjá can be associated with the Virgin Mary but she is as complex as a human being, with the exception of those who have infinite powers over procreation and the safety of ocean fishermen. I have heard that Iemanjá's sons, people ruled by the orixá, are considered false because Imanjá is like the sea; deceitful and sly she can appear very calm on the surface and be extremely agitated deep down and vice versa.

I found inspiration for Iemajá in the song *Morena Do Mar* composed by Dorival Caymmi and performed by Nara Leão (Albin 2006:178-179 & 397;

Leão 1967), a popular Bossa Nova singer from Rio de Janeiro. I enjoy myself wondering about the following questions: Am I *cafona*—a Brazilian *dag*? Are all Latin people dags? Am I showing and exaggerating the cliché of what you “the other” sees in me, a Brazilian in Australia? Am I a farce of an orixá in a state of play?

Perhaps I am not a farce but an *erê*? *Erês* are the manifestation of the spirit of the children in Umbanda. The *erês*, like children, sometimes play at being “mummy”. So, *São Cosme* and *Damião*⁵⁵ party without *guaraná*⁵⁶ but with fake teeth. The teeth were already present in this first performance, appearing and disappearing somewhat hesitantly but with considerable power; the teeth of the “underdeveloped”, the Brazilian maid or perhaps my seemingly drugged neighbour in Heidelberg Heights⁵⁷ who pestered me with offers of “help”. Sketches of *Macabéa* and *Josephina* were also present in *Little World I*, in the character who tries to be elegant and charming despite her psychological and social disasters. She believes she is divine like a goddess connected to a disturbed “nature”, to the four elements of Candomblé—water, fire, air and earth—like the orixás. At the same time she knows she is a clown with all the pain that being a mute clown brings.

That is correct, a mute—the music and movement are the main focus, which was perfect for me at the time with my struggle to communicate in English. This is the character’s way, a sufferer who enjoys her own “cannibal Brazilian-ness”. Rather than speaking, she chews, sighs and laughs delicately. She, this main character and only character of *Little World I*, is called *Ela*, She.

Ela eats flowers and mimes to passionate love songs with her mouth full of petals chopped up into many little pieces—*aparecida com sangue*, like blood—the flowers chewed through vampire teeth. I was always anthropophagical. This was why even in Brazil I was always considered “a very Brazilian performer”, and so too my style of work.

Does this mean that I was “over the top” from very early on? Of course, I have never been very “European”, *chique* (chic) or, more specifically, “French”. Although I do know of one French influence that would become

⁵⁵ Catholic children’s saints and Umbanda *erês*

⁵⁶ A popular Brazilian drink made from an Amazonian fruit

⁵⁷ A northern suburb of Melbourne

evident in *Little World III*, my aunt Madre Maria Aimée Reis, a nun from the French order *Dominicanas de Nossa Senhora do Rosário Monteils*. I've heard she was a progressive nun, funny, and eccentric; spoke perfect French and had a loud laugh, just like mine. Perhaps the nun was already evident in the chewing teeth in *Little World I* and would appear later, much more clearly defined in *Little World III*, presented at the La Mama theatre in Melbourne.

9.3.3 Onde estão os orixás?

I don't know much about orixás, but I want to learn to behave like *iniciados*⁵⁸ do, when they learn how to again be an adult after changing their name, isolating themselves completely from the world, shaving their head and staying silent for days during the initiation rituals into Candomblé (Cruz 1995; Santos 1993). This highly theatrical ritual called *Panã* prepares initiates for a new life. The initiate "re-learns" how to talk, how to shop, how to be a boy, a girl, then a man or a woman. I am not a person from Candomblé but I have asked permission from the orixás to read their myths and get inspiration from them as an artist. Is this re-learning not unlike the experience of the displaced in a foreign country—a re-evaluation of self, values and goals?

The character *Ela* is *sensual e passionai*, sensual and passionate, and so, considering the orixá stereotypes, which are always questionable and vary from *casa do santo* to *casa do santo*⁵⁹, the character journeys through *Iansã*, the orixá of love and war. In the physical manifestations of Candomblé and Umabanda rituals, I have often noticed that the orixás are both loving and violent at different moments and in different ways. Just like the wind, *Iansã* can be tempestuous or calm and gentle like a fresh breeze.

Ela appears at times to be dead but is not. She is a Goddess who gets around by scooter to the sound of João Gilberto singing '*S Wonderful* (Gilberto 1977). *Onde estão os orixás?* Where are the orixás? They are in command of the universe of course, which in this case is a small spinning top that *She*, the Goddess, interacts, manipulates and allows herself to dominate. However, *Ela* makes fun of herself. Is she really a goddess or a toy from God?

At the time of this performance I was losing contact with the Orixás—where are the orixás? I was in Melbourne, it was winter and cold, and so far from Brazil the potency of this aesthetic path was waning. In this *Little World*

⁵⁸ Someone who has been initiated.

⁵⁹ The houses of Candomblé worship.

I, began a dislocation—and my research began to move into unknown territory.

I was very embarrassed about my accent and my poor English. I presented a seminar at the South Project to complement the performance with pictures in a PowerPoint display. These were images of feminine orixás like *Iansã*, *Oxum* and *Iemanjá*. I said to the audience: “*agora eu vou entrar em transe!*”, “now I am going into a trance!” This was an ironic joke, but the audience believed it. This ability to “go into a trance” is perhaps a spontaneous ability of Brazilian performers? It is in the unconscious of the Brazilian actor pretending and believing to be in a trance.

9.4 PICA Performance: *Little World II*

The performance in Perth was based on the interrelation between odd objects and kinds of sung speech that I would call a messy, Latin version of *Sprechgesang*—the German musical term that means literally “speech—song” and emerged in the beginning of the Twentieth Century as a form of vocalisation mid-way between speech and singing and most notably employed by Schoenberg in his *Pierrot lunaire* (Ringer 2006:98). I started the performance with *Sprechgesang* and with some contorted movements, perhaps grotesque to some, but playful. I dressed myself in a Japanese kimono and attached many lollipops and other lollies to a wide sash tied around my waist. The first thing I did was to create a pathway decorated with *Havaianas*⁶⁰—“thongs” in Australian English or “flip-flops” elsewhere, typically Brazilian and in several colours. This was the performer, José Eduardo Garcia de Moraes⁶¹ idea. We thought the *Havaianas* would be a strong reference to Brazil.

(Brazilians are proud of having such good flip-flops, flip-flops whose “straps don’t bend”, which “don’t smell” and “are the real thing”, according to the television adverts. They were something of a “national pride” during my childhood. I later discovered that “thongs” in Australia are also considered something quintessentially Australian! This is very funny. Let’s discuss later whether these flip-flops are Australian or Brazilian? *O que você acha?* What do you think? I discovered this when I was talking to a friend and he told me he found it funny that Brazilians think flip-flops are so important—but having said

⁶⁰ Literally *Hawaiians* in English.

⁶¹ A Brazilian performance artist well known for using supermarket items in his performances.

that, let's not forget *vegemite*.⁶² I know that perhaps this subject has no importance whatsoever, and this "unimportance" is actually an important subject in my thesis. What is the importance of the things we are proud of in life which are not very important if you move to another country? What is the importance in the fact flip-flops somehow; to some at least, represent Brazil? What is the importance of unimportant things like small toys, plastic teeth or a plastic washing machine? Countries themselves often have no importance either and so too, people. What about fake glasses with huge eyes falling out and childhood songs full of swear words and sexual, racial, social and political connotations? What is the value of a lack of value? We can create new values.)

Essa performance na PICA foi sobre isso: bagunça, perdição, criancice, tolice, falta de importância, marginalidade, falta de interesse dos "outros" em "mim"(uma latina que não dança samba nem joga capoeira), meu desinteresse pelos "outros", clichês de se ser uma latina perdida no oeste da Austrália, um lugar que eu detestei muitas vezes e amei mais do que tudo pela beleza geografia, natural do rio Swan, o Rio Cisne em português.

This performance at PICA was about the following: mess, perdition, childishness, foolishness, lack of importance, delinquency, lack of interest in "others" or in "myself" (a Latin girl who dances neither samba nor *capoeira*⁶³), my disinterest in "others", clichés about being a Latin woman lost in the west of Australia, a place I have hated many times and loved more than anything because of its physical beauty—that of the Swan River for example, *Rio Cisne* in Portuguese. My *Havaianas* had no, or rather had confused, symbolic value in Perth. A Japanese kimono seemed the most interesting thing to wear—and moreover, a perfect combination with black tights. It looked funny with the *Havaianas*. I held a Portuguese fan and danced a dance of some orixás. I did it really badly because, as I have already explained, I can't follow choreography very well, but it was all done in a humorous way. Many people laughed a lot, hysterically, especially during the dance itself. I think the "chulap, chulap, chulap, clapt, clapt, clapt" sound of the *Havaianas* on the floor, the black socks, the kimono, the blond wig and the serious way in which

⁶² For the benefit of non-Australian readers—a salty black and tar-like substance produced as a by-product of brewing and generally eaten as a spread on toast. Expatriate Australians commonly go to great lengths to obtain supplies of the substance.

⁶³ A Brazilian martial art.

I danced and repeated the movements so rigorously, made the scene seem pathetic. I had not expected this.

That was exactly it; I tried to be cross-cultural, a sophisticated animal at the zoo, a Brazilian *arara*, macaw, in extinction and speaking like a *caboclo* from a centre of Umbanda (see 4.4), singing in a trance, I don't know what exactly, a creature capable of inventing languages, repeating her memories and echoing her fears—a creature capable of being strange, an “original”, “sincere” and “authentic” performer.

I had to be all these clichés of *autenticidade, espiritualidade e interculturalismo*—authenticity, spirituality and inter-culturalism—but I do know that I loved doing it. An artist, a German as it happens, criticized me saying the performance was *uma bagunça*, “a mess”, despite my being a “marvelous actress”. I *know* there is mess in my life and on the stage. He is right as a German but wrong as a Brazilian *arara*. *Araras* love mess and speak without thinking about meanings, at least not directly. What is the meaning of a Sprechgesang (Germans again!) inspired by the voices of entities—spirits, *pretos velhos*, *caboclos*, *exús* (see 4.4)—from Brazilian culture? Does this exist? Is it important? Is it merely a joke? Ah, how lazy I feel!

Here, I speak in the broken Portuguese used by *caboclos* and *pretos velhos*,⁶⁴ when they appear in the *terreiros*—a name for Umbanda shrines—during works of curing:

*Ohhhh zifia zifio xe taji dodói eji gifii?
Eu vozi fazezitrabaiadoji conseije tonight
Becoji eu jitaji semji sabeji o que fazessi nexa terra de mio deuzi jifi
Uquequi dianta fazeji coisica de nada titica e o que a gente vale neji
jifios?*

*[Ohhhh my son, are you sicki-wiki my baby?
I am going to sort you out tonight
Because you don't know what to do in this world of God my sweetie
What's the point of suffering over feeling worthless, we are all but
worthless things]*

Suddenly I take a step forward, put on different *Havaianas* and it is as though I have an aerial, a transmitter which changes channel with each step taken. I sing a song from my childhood, very vulgar and racist, which embarrasses me but I have to admit that I learnt it from my cousins, Carolina

⁶⁴ Because of their class.

and Beatriz, who lived in Acre, right up in the top of Brazil, near the forest, the end of world. They would sing it in my ear because it was forbidden to say:

*Neguinha do Fubá - ah ah
Se eu pedir você me da - do do
E se eu pagar um guaraná ah ah
Então segura que la vai - ai ai*

*[Little black girl of the corn - ah ah
If I ask to shag you - do do
And if I give you guaraná⁶⁵ - ah ah
Better hold on tight, here we go - ai ai]*

(repeat many times until you get tired)

Then I take another step, change my *Havaianas* and vocalise my *Sprechgesang*:

*Zeca você foi ingrato me levou pro mato me desafiou
Hoje sou mulher da vida de peito caído que você mamou
Zeca vou cortar seu saco pra tampar o buraco que você furou
Então dou mais um passo e canto:*

*Sonhei com a imagem sua mijei na cama caguei na rua
A bosta endureceu passou um carro e furou o pneu
Me levaram pra prefeitura me examinaram e era bosta pura Me levaram
pro xadrez.
Por desaforo caguei três vezes.*

*[Zeca you are ungrateful; you seduced me and took me to the bush
Today I'm a whore with sagging breasts that you sucked
I'm going to cut off your balls to cover the hole that you punched
So I'll take a step forward and sing:*

*I dreamt of your face; I wet the bed and shat in the street
The shit got hard and burst the tires of a car
I was arrested; they searched my body only to find I was pure shit
So they took me to gaol
Out of spite I shat thrice more]*

These songs are horrible, I know. They are very dirty, silly and I don't know why I decided to sing them. I was sick of Perth, of the isolation and invisibility. Am I silly? I knew nobody could understand a word of it and I felt a fraud pretending to be an *atriz santa*, a goody-goody actress saint in a trance. But what I was saying was actually nonsense—deliberate nonsense, but nonsense.

⁶⁵ Drink popular with children.

I am not sorry that performance is over, I think it was the birth of a plastic baby with a rubber mum, wig and blood in her veins. I myself felt like a doll with a very thick skin to defend myself. I started removing my costume leaving only the kimono and a moustache like Gómez Pena's. I started to talk to the audience, to seduce a spectator who did nothing but laugh. I said:

What's your name, handsome?

(I remained very calm and connected to this spectator; the other people were laughing loudly). He said his name and went very red. I improvised and said things like:

Wow.....ai.....ai.....ai!!

I talked to him and told him I was tired and, as I was a Brazilian performer, I was going to go into a trance right there and then; right that minute, go! I started to transform, artificially and completely.

I started to emit strange sounds in a guttural voice and I created a vocal and physical sequence using the microphone. (I imitated a little bit of what I had been reading about, listening to and researching about Afro-Brazilian religions).

The character was quite absurd. A Brazilian alienated from herself not knowing how to fit in with Australia. She seemed magical, dense, illuminated, an artist and one who was sometimes *entrevada*, locked into the religious darkness of possession and feminine passivity of mediumistic incorporation. She seemed to incorporate *Cosme* and *Damião* (see also 9.6.9), the two brothers celebrated as *erês*, child saints, in Umbanda. It was a child spirit, out of place, homeless. But these children are mischievous and serious at the same time. They want to know things, they are intelligent and perhaps all children are like this.

I am going to be honest: I just want to play—*me deixa!*—let me! I don't care about this whole theatre and performance thing. It's so boring! I do it because I must. This is destiny. It is the same as being born. After that, you live. She is a wise fool. I am a fool and wise too.

In fact I have been using plastic dolls in my performances, all broken into pieces. All this reminds me of the ex-votos, the room of miracles in the churches where worshippers seek grace and offer objects to the saints in

gratitude. I offer myself to the saints. I am a horse to be mounted but I also like to gallop. Is that phallic? Does to be mounted demand submission? All this talk of holiness in the theatre is the same as religion. Why are so many *pai-de-santos*, holy fathers, gay? The actor must be this and must be that. She must clean her teeth of course. She must shower and eat. She must sleep too.

Mother:

I am always talking about maternity, and the loss of a childhood that I will never forget. She is an adult who childishly plays with strange objects she loves. They are familiar yet strange. Just like a family: mum, dad, brother, sister and son etc ... is there anything stranger than that?!

I took another step forward down the path of *Havaianas*. I noticed that all the other *Havaianas* were all mixed up, a great, colourful mess on the floor, a fallen wig, even a *berrante* I brought from São Paulo once; an instrument with a bull's horn which makes a sound like a cow in the fields watching a soap-opera about life in the bush, (this is in my imagination, a world dominated by cows: actor-cows, director-cows and of course soap-operas about cows with cows acting and the music produced from cow sounds). This is a hallucination connected to my *mineira*⁶⁶ roots, I know. I apologise. This is very provincial, I know.

Nobody there could understand the meaning: Portuguese, *portinglês*,⁶⁷ badly-spoken English with a Brazilian accent, childish language—babyish Portuguese for foreigners in love, grunts, groans etc. I can not repeat exactly each step taken because I made a plan, and as I always do in my life, ended up doing other, unplanned things. I remember I stayed in a sort of trance that wasn't a real trance. I left them guessing, because I know that I am not speaking "the truth", I know that I am "acting" and that they think I am a Latin woman, a bit crazy and disorganized when I'm acting. I followed the path of *Havaianas* and I put them in perfect order, one pair after another, each one a different colour and then, what happened? Mess! Mess! Mess!

⁶⁶ A woman from Minas Gerais

⁶⁷ In Brazil we joke about *portunhol*—Portuguese made to sound Spanish by using Spanish pronunciations of Portuguese. In reality however, genuine hybrid forms exist of the two languages such as *Riverense Portunhol*, found in a certain border region with Uruguay. *Portinglês* is a natural extension of this idea with English.

In *Little World II* I recited a beautiful poem about love by the Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões:

*Amor é um fogo que arde sem se ver,
é ferida que doi, e não se sente;
é um contentamento descontente,
é dor que desatina sem doer.*

*É um não querer mais que bem querer;
é um andar solitário entre a gente;
é nunca contentar-se de contente;
é um cuidar que ganha em se perder.*

*É querer estar preso por vontade;
é servir a quem vence, o vencedor;
é ter com quem nos mata, lealdade.*

*Mas como causar pode seu favor
nos corações humanos amizade,
se tão contrário a si é o mesmo Amor?*

*[Love is a fire that burns unseen,
a wound that aches yet isn't felt,
an always discontent contentment,
a pain that rages without hurting,*

*a longing for nothing but to long,
a loneliness in the midst of people,
a never feeling pleased when pleased,
a passion that gains when lost in thought.*

*It's being enslaved of your own free will;
it's counting your defeat a victory;
it's staying loyal to your killer.*

*But if it's so self-contradictory,
how can Love, when Love chooses,
bring human hearts into sympathy?]*

A mantra song from the *Nô* Japanese theatre inspired me. I don't know why but Brazil is also super Japanese too—with many immigrants from Japan. Nobody understands this but I was extremely influenced by Japanese culture in Brazil. I would walk and talk, take a step forward, put on a different pair of *Havaianas*, in a different colour and say whatever came into my head. I would sing a silly song with the intensity of a medium in a trance, I would play with the small objects I'd found on the road outside....where I went all alone, dressed in my kimono and floral fan, a small plastic electric fan, marshmallows, a glass and a soundtrack with João Gilberto singing 'S Wonderful (Gilberto 1977) mixed by Iain Mott with Wagner's Tristão and Isolda (Wagner 2004). João Gilberto sings rather comically "marvelous,

wonderful, you should care for me” in a very heavy accent, in English that is awful, funny and sweet. I think he knew all along that he was funny and perhaps João Gilberto was being self-ironic. Me too. It is about *isolamento*, *perda*, *deslocamento*—isolation, loss, dislocation—and a lack of answers. And love has to be there of course; after all I am a Latin woman ... that’s a gift. Am I proud like a flamenco dancer? Am I temperamental?

During the performance I played a recording of me reading in Portuguese a letter from a Brazilian friend telling me how things were going in Brazil and about her life. Here is an English translation:

9.4.1 Gisela’s Letter

Hi Si,

Well, it’s a shame I didn’t see you whilst you were here ...

Yes, I’m more and more convinced that I’m not quite right in the head ... I’m a little bit crazy!!!

My love life is going well but love is ever-changing. Everything is going well between me and Gustavo now. I really like him, I really do. I like living with him - he’s the independent type, he does a thousand things all at once and I have my domestic freedom. I have my own space and time to do what I want, in other words, I have privacy. But, I don’t know what goes through my mind...I’m always worried about something...jealousy, money (or the lack of it), and other things, both big and small. The worst thing has been trying to deal with my jealousy, me against myself. It’s difficult!! Torture! But things are going to get better, I’m barracking for it. Apparently, I don’t have any reason to feel jealous, it’s just my fantasies, but, oh I don’t know. The solution I found for such a big weight on my mind was to enrol at a gym, very perua,⁶⁸ with a personal trainer at my side. I’ve been working out a lot to exercise my real muscles and not my mental ones.

I’ve been writing stories. I’m trying to write a book. I think that I’ll have a book ready by the end of the year and then I’ll see what I’m going to do with the material. I’m really enjoying writing. This is something else that saves me.

A performance about love ... I’ll think of a story and then answer you tomorrow. As soon as I read your e-mail, I remembered a sonnet by Camões. Well, it’s not exactly a story. You probably remember the musical version by Renato Russo: “Amor é fogo que arde sem se ver” and so on. I’ll send you the sonnet in an attachment, just because I think it’s

⁶⁸ Difficult to translate—a type of Brazilian woman who is extremely feminine and takes an active approach to her beauty, with clothes, exercise and beauty treatments including plastic surgery.

beautiful and really relevant to my life at the moment. Actually, I don't think the sonnet will do for your performance as it doesn't really have a story to it and you're also dealing with another language. Nothing else comes to mind at the moment apart from that story by Inês de Castro and Pedro, the King of Portugal. Do you know it? It's narrated in "Os Lusíadas" by Camões. I'm so Portuguese lately ... (laughter). Well, the story about Inês is told in the saying, "Agora é tarde, Inês é morta". (Now it's too late, Inês is dead). It is about a woman that Pedro loved. She wasn't a noble or a woman of great means. By taking advantage of Pedro's absence, the aristocrats killed her. When Pedro arrives, there is an absurd, strange scene where he orders them to dig up his beloved's body and the barons are lined up and made to kiss her hands (already decomposed by this stage). Perhaps this is a story of terror ... Because of this story, Pedro became known as 'the Terrible'.

Brasília is quite pretty this winter. I like it when it's dry. Otherwise, I've been at home, writing and studying literature and linguistics, basically staying in a lot. At the most, I go to the cinema or to friends' houses. I haven't been out a lot. In other words, I don't really know what's been going on in Brasília. I know politics is boiling over, thousands of accusations against the government - nothing changes.

So you've moved? Tell me more about it. How's Davi? How great to hear you're happy! Please send me your new phone number.

Right, I'm going to try and remember some other stories and I'll write to you tomorrow.

Hugs and kisses

Gisela

9.5 Stories on objects for *Little World III*

Objects were vitally important to the development of *Little World III* and I collected toys and other objects like a bowerbird, over the course of my four-year project. The objects finally selected for the performance are itemised in section 9.8 Production Materials. By way of introduction to *Little World III*, this section gives the story of how some five items were selected: ⁶⁹

9.5.1 Pink jacket

I've got this jacket that I bought in a shop in Brunswick Street. I really like the shop although things are quite expensive there. When I saw the colour, I felt so excited! I could not help buying it. It was winter in Melbourne and I walked in the streets as I was performing.

⁶⁹ But not necessarily used in the final performance.

I am living in Perth now and lots of people ask me where I got this funky jacket. When I saw a friend again who lives in Perth but is from Germany, he said, "Melbourne. Why don't we bring all the funky things that happen in Melbourne to Perth? It would be perfect".

Another woman in a café asked me where about I had got this jacket and she said, "Of course, Melbourne. You can find fantastic things in Melbourne". Another person said that my hair is so black and I am so dark that it makes a beautiful contrast with the jacket. Whenever I want to be complemented, I wear this jacket. The sadder I am, the happier I so easily become, wearing this jacket. It is a way of communicating with people—a simple jacket. It seems that everybody loves pink but not everybody is brave enough to wear it.

That's my Melbournian revolution in Perth. I will experiment by saying that this jacket is from Brazil. What would people say? Of course! Carnival!

9.5.2 Teeth

I've got this set of fake, plastic teeth that I bought at *Piedmontes* supermarket in Fitzroy North in Melbourne. The people there are Italian. Is there any meaning in this?

My son Davi got it for me actually. I thought it was a good idea. I always keep an eye on Davi's toys. We have to share sometimes but he is generous. When he was born I gave him all my toys. It represented my attempt at becoming an adult. However, after sometime, also because of my father's death and grief in my family, I became unhappy and fat and so I decided to play again. I was 28. I've never stopped playing since.

I started using many different types of teeth. Davi introduced me to a toy shop where he saw some other different types. I bought teeth compulsively. It was in 2004.

Why? It was a memory of Brazil perhaps. *Estava com saudades*. I was homesick. Mark, my supervisor, said that I should not have to explain why. And I keep trying to explain. Why?! They make me feel different, those teeth, especially the ugly, broken ones that remind me of Brazilian poverty. When I smile I see how nice poor people might be. It reminds me of a phrase of Hilda Hilst's: *Quem é pobre é feliz mãe?* "Mother, are poor people happy?" It seems

brave and humble when those people with damaged teeth smile so nicely. They remind me of all the suffering of people in Brazil. Hilda also commented once that people with no Italian or Portuguese background in Brazil usually have no teeth.

I once met a friend by chance in Uberaba with whom I'd lost contact for 10 years. He is a very bright person who does fantastic work in performances with street kids. His teeth were this way and it means that he must have become very poor. He invited me to have an orange juice with him in the Uberaba market. He called me but didn't leave his phone number. I came back to Australia without meeting him. He is an intellectual with horrible teeth.

My teeth are dark because I had a lot of antibiotics in my childhood. I was an ill child with lots of allergies. If I was a slave they would not choose me ... I've heard that the Portuguese used to choose the best black slaves from Africa for Brazil according to their teeth. Good teeth, healthy slave.

9.5.3 The dress

The dress was changed many times. Foi *uma tortura!* It was torture and a lot of work and very tiring. There is no pleasure in it anymore for me or the dressmaker. We started criticizing the dress and the shapes that it made on my body. *Patético*. It was pathetic. I was in Uberaba and in the end my Mother and the dressmaker decided what to do. They said, "If it is for a PhD performance, it has to be great. Why didn't you tell me before? The dress that you want to wear is horrible—I should have told you!" I had to agree. So, she said, "I have a wonderful thing for you". And it was amazing. The dress was fancy, and black, and designed by my mother and the dressmaker. However, now I have the feeling that I should wear white after all. The image of the nurses and dervishes came to me like in a dream—so real—like a message from the spirits. I have watched Fellini's *Juliet of the Spirits* many times and she also wears white. This is the time to wear white, like in Candomblé too. White!

9.5.4 Novelty glasses for children's parties

These silly novelty glasses have big red eyes that move up and down on springs. When I bought them I realized that this emulation of shock is perfect for my performance! It is about somebody who seems to be very intellectual—they're wearing glasses after all—but who does not even begin to understand

the meaning of life. It's like *Waiting for Godot*—he reads some books but can not actually understand them. He says some phrases about the meaning of life and is tragicomic and absurd.

9.6 *Little World III*

Please also refer to Offering 10, the *Little World* script.

9.6.1 Interpretation between the lines

Despite having my supervisor, Mark Minchinton, and the Sydney-based Brazilian director, Carlos Gomes as witnesses to the process of conception and rehearsals of *Little World III*, I can say that this last and urgent version of the same creative process that started four years ago in Melbourne, is entirely my own work (I have listed below in Section 9.7 the roles of my collaborators in the development process). I do what I have always done with great pleasure, in various ways, throughout my career in performance, both as an actress and as a director: the physical and symbolic devouring of the other, the stranger who is there and who comes in from the outside, of the stranger I see in the other and the compulsive chewing *dos clichês do que se pode ser visto pelo outro*, of the clichés which can be seen by the other:

A latina Americana, the Latin American woman, *a performer brasileiro*, the Brazilian performer, *a mãe*, the mother, *a criança*, the child, *o latino machista*, the Latin chauvinist, *o assaltante violento*, the violent assailant, *o romantico mulherengo*, the romantic womanizer, *a empregada domestica brasileira*, the Brazilian maid, *a artista e a farsante*, the artist and the smooth operator, *a mulher brasileira*, the Brazilian woman, *a carnavalesca*, the carnivalesque, *a freira*, the nun ... the voodoo worshipper, the criminal from the internet who led desperate women to suicide.

It is important to notice that in some parts of this exegesis I say "I" when I describe a character in action in a scene. Other times I say "the character". In fact, there is no separation between actor and character. This is the performance element of a show that mixes performance art and life (person) and theatre (character). The (auto)ethnography enabled me to explore innumerable possibilities as a performer and researcher. An autoethnographic performance is a world of things despite being just a little world related to Brazil and to my background and I had the fascinating opportunity to think and investigate in depth *o sentido da vida e da arte*, the meaning of life and art.

The process of elaboration of this final version of *Little World*, and the previous ones, has been fascinating and arduous because I knew that I was expressing twenty years of performance and thirty-nine years of life, not forgetting that four of these were spent in Australia. I wrote all the text (with the exception of the parts I borrowed or cannibalised from Lispector, Cixous, Kristeva, Kafka, Fellini, Pontes, Hilst, and popular songs) during my four years in Australia. I also cannibalized some of my work from previous performances, reworking and translating them. Revisiting my childhood was intriguing and surprising to me. Remembering details which I do not know if they were registered or invented by my memory, I can say that the veracity of my autobiography is as real as my ability to go into a trance, i.e. if it is real or not, we do not know and there is no attempt to prove something to the audience. It is also an interpretation between the lines.

9.6.2 The set

Little World is an offering, or rather a set of hybrid offerings. The initial production design included a chest-of-drawers that I would open like small magic boxes throughout the show. *Em cada caixa encontraria objetos coletados de todos os tipos e com particularidades e funções bizarras, misteriosas.* Each box would have collected objects of all kinds and with bizarre and mysterious peculiarities and functions. These objects could potentially be transformed into a costume or to define elements of new characters—emerging from visual interference or sonic manifestations of the objects found in each box.

Because of financial constraints, I opted to simplify the production design and ultimately the set involved: a white wooden cot, toys in the cot and strewn all over the floor, a child's pink armchair with footrest and telephone, an ex-voto installation and a projection screen.

The final set design is more melancholic and intended to contextualise the character within a day-to-day reality, almost surreal but not completely absurd. It was a lonely woman's room, one who perhaps had had a son or who, maybe, was a maid and whose dream was to become an actress or a singer; a woman who had perhaps a lover and a disappointment in love, a woman who perhaps remembered her childhood whilst she tidied her daughter's room. The set in some way fixed the characters in a daily reality. The set however distanced the audience from a position of realism and

dramaturgical linearity through visual interference, through *mess*—different kinds of false moustaches, various models of false teeth, plastic Mickey Mouse ears, plastic kangaroo masks, lawnmowers, toy planes etc (see 9.8). I did not intend *Little World* to be a “linear” performance.

9.6.3 Vampire nuns, Roberto Carlos and a graveyard for dolls

By pretending that I am a vampire nun with plastic teeth I in turn become anthropophagic. Does everything mean something in the *Little World* performance? Why do I wear plastic teeth throughout the show? I use various kinds of teeth that I have collected greedily throughout the four years of my research. The first set of teeth was found in a store for children’s parties. This does not mean that the show is superficial or childish. I am not afraid of the childish, nor do I consider it sweet or innocent. Children can be like cannibals—terrible, cruel and ever-starving. That is why they love to wear vampire teeth. But I do not want to prove anything with this thesis. Why are the pieces of doll body parts in the installation under the stairs at La Mamma theatre? This is a reference to the votive offerings and the Bonfim church in Bahia, Brazil and the offerings express a marriage of body and spirit. Anthropophagy is also present in the Bonfim church. The miracle room has something magical, from Africa, from the Indigenous, from macumba.

Sacrifice and offerings are also anthropophagised in *Little World*. The nun expresses one of the manifestations of *Josefine-the-artist*. Both the artist Josefine and the nun *Sister Rotina* believe they have a mission. The “call” is a shared cliché of religion and of the artist, of the mother and perhaps even the child. The child has to save Brazil, doesn’t he?

When I was a child I would hear that the child was important, that he/she represented the future of the nation. I took this responsibility very seriously—perhaps too seriously. At the same time I felt incapable of dealing with such expectations. I enjoyed playing. I remember I felt inadequate and would pretend to be a silly little girl who loved dolls. I understood the parallel very early on of “little doll” and “little girl”, but I was too naughty to sustain the character. I used to hate it when people stroked my head and said “how cute” and whenever they did, I would squeal like a monkey—eeeeeeeachkt!—much to my mother’s embarrassment—she told her friends I was a devil. I played with dolls because I was awful at sports and hated football. Perhaps this explains the cot full of toys in *Little World*. Some dolls are offerings to the

spirits and saints, the orixás and the erês. The other toys in the cot constitute the *world* of the dolls, the *little world*. This is where the kangaroo is born at the beginning of the show. This kangaroo is ambiguous and, in fact, I think the mask may be a deer's mask that looks like a kangaroo. So there is always room for many different interpretations. As you might infer from what I wrote at the start of this section, *I never intended being "organised" in my creative process.*

At the beginning of the show, the clamor created by the talking dolls and other toys expresses my alienation. I remember my family sitting around watching the football and shouting (I have three older brothers and a sister, who acted like a boy and who loved football). I never watched the World Cup—I was an extra terrestrial.

That is how *Little World* begins: a baby/mummy out-of-place and alienated, immersed in the cacophony of toys. When I was a child I would hear my brothers shouting *caramba!* "gosh!" *filho da puta!* "son of a whore!" in the TV room. In Brazil not liking football can cause enormous feelings of isolation and alienation! My father did not like it either and was considered to be very serious because of this and other reasons. He was a nationalist angered by corruption. He loved intellectuals, Brazilian music and the new modernist capital of Brasilia. He was extremely reserved and quiet; he spoke little and was conservative. My father was also the one out-of place. My garrulous mother, who could communicate even with spirits, is the noise in the performance and the mysticism. She is also another kind of anger. She decided to call me Simone because she felt too old to be a mother, she was forty-two, and she loved Simone de Beauvoir. Feminism was thus embedded in my head from a very young age. But I only understood feminism as my mother's anger through the domineering attitude of my father. She was never allowed to drive a car or work outside the home and she always thought he had a mistress.

Perhaps it was my feminine aggression that led me to destroy my dolls and create doll cemeteries. Religion was all-pervasive in my home. I used to pray for the soul of my dolls and would make up a Mass and bury them in the yard. I would hang the little legs and heads of the dolls in the dolls house which was actually a water tank in the yard of our house in Uberaba—the land

of dinosaurs.⁷⁰ All the sadness of being a woman that I saw in my mother, the pain of maternity, the lack of a voice, the pain of ageing, the sacrifice of being a mother at forty-two and the fear of death.

My mother was afraid of dying and leaving us. She always talked about death. The spiritualists of course have a strong connection with death; Mexicans too. My mother prayed a lot and my father, who was an atheist, called her *uma irmã*, "a nun". So, *Irmã Rotina*, the vampire nun is also my mother, who never lost faith in her spiritual protection. My mother would always "confess" when my father went out to work. She would shout *Bosta! Eu vou desabafar!* "Shit! I'm going to get it all off my chest!". We had a double life; immense freedom when our father was out and very constrained behaviour when he returned. This was a kind of farce in which I became accustomed to living, and was perhaps, a form of training for acting.

Back to the show. I start off by sitting in a cot wearing a kangaroo mask and winding several music boxes. It is Genesis—the *cot of civilization* where everything starts. I am a baby and a mother at the same time and, after a few minutes, I am a Brazilian maid turning off all the noisy and annoying toys scattered over the stage—an evolution of sorts. I explore the myths and take to the extreme the social stereotypes and the sad, funny, political, false, revealing things in all this.

The maid, the same singing rat that wears a maid's apron, sings a *brega*, a corny love song by the popular Brazilian singer Roberto Carlos, nicknamed *o rei*, the king. I can say that *brega* and Latin are an integral part of the Brazilian family. I love Roberto Carlos. This is a lie. Did I ever love him? Someone very close to me loves Roberto Carlos. I do not love him but she does. *Ela quem?* Who is she? My neighbour's cousin, her brother's boyfriend, the maid, Geraldinho. A lot of *brega* and *xique*,⁷¹ chic, people love Roberto Carlos. *Ele já morreu?* Has he already died? *Ele nunca vai morrer*. He will never die.

The votive offerings, beneath the stairs at La Mama, resonate with the imaginary world of my childhood. As well as referencing the *Igreja do Nosso Senhor do Bonfim* (see 1.2) the doll parts portray my *dollhouse/cemetery* in

⁷⁰ The countryside surrounding Uberaba has high palaeontologic significance.

⁷¹ A popular but incorrect Portuguese spelling for chic. The correct Portuguese word is *chique*.

Uberaba. I always liked the world of the spirits and of the dead. My mother would say that the spirits were always around us, seeing everything. I had a readymade audience to watch me! I was never alone!

Now I see myself surrounded by books, authors and by my ignorance. Again I am ready to bite. I loved to bite when I was a child. With age I have tempered this tendency, but still today I am fascinated by teeth. I have already mentioned my neighbour who had no teeth (see 9.3.2) whom I once called to frighten away the rats in my apartment in Heidelberg Heights—but who became himself a pest. I was afraid of that man and would sleep clutching the telephone. The terrifying, seemingly drugged, Australian neighbour with no teeth would knock on the door every night offering *help*: “How can I help you?” After moving and breaking my rental-contract, I began to interpret this Australian creature in front of the mirror. He had no teeth whatsoever.

The vampire nun with her gummy monster’s mouth thus makes reference to him. Also the rats in my apartment became an ally of Josefine and one more element in this cannibal hybrid research. Out of fear of the toothless man and to conquer his image in my mind, I started to use all kinds of false teeth, small, large, sharp, rotten and uneven. The image became mixed with that of poor Brazilians.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña is a Mexican anthropophagist who lives in the United States. I was a quasi-uncommunicative actress-performer with a bevy of plastic teeth and many colourful toys living temporarily in Australia. The toys compensate for problems in communication and a lack of friends. I admit to regression and at the time of my early performances my best friend was my son who was seven. Because of our isolation, we would play for hours and started to frequent giant toy shops “carrying out research”. We took this very seriously and I must thank Davi for his cooperation, as he truly understood the difference between frivolous consumption and rigorous research. The toys we would share and for me the toys became company and often spoke on my behalf. As I have already explained, I am not a ballerina as I lack the talent this requires. What can be done with an actress with poor English?

This is why I use toys in *Little World*. Not to pretend but to communicate. This little world we create to protect ourselves, to provoke and seduce as a consequence of isolation and inadequacy.

9.6.4 Flight Control

Everything started in a tiny apartment in Fitzroy North. I would rehearse for hours in this one-bedroom unit where I lived with my child. Since there was little space, Davi, who was 8 years old at the time was, and somewhat unavoidably, “invited” to work with me. He was curious and interested in writing and performing and besides, his English was much better than mine; much more casual, natural and convincing.

I asked him to write scenes for my performance. He loved the idea and we started our collaboration. One day I was rehearsing, wearing a helmet (his bicycle helmet) and riding his scooter, creating movements in front of the mirror and pretending to myself that I was a “contemporary dancer”. In fact at that stage I had the feeling I had lost control of my life and my work. Seeing me in the helmet and on the scooter, Davi, inspired, spontaneously composed the *Flight Control* scene. We worked together on the text and some three years later, would again redevelop the idea with the *Little World III* collaborators Carlos Gomes and Iain Mott.

It was initially about a mother-traveler-performer who is lost and about to fall, to die, to faint, to collapse, to jump, to be eaten by a crocodile in Amazon Forest or devoured by a dingo in Australian desert. She is about to give up. I remember Clarice Lispector saying that desistence is a revelation. I memorized this phrase many years ago:

Desistence is a revelation, once you open your hands something falls in it!

I don’t remember where I read it. But I never forgot. I wanted to give up as much as I wanted the artistic/personal revelation. How embarrassing ... This mother is being saved by her child who luckily takes the control of the situation, the flight control, especially the knowledge of the language.

The airplane was the scooter at that time. However, in one of my many trips to toy shops I found a beautiful electric toy, a yellow musical aeroplane-tricycle cross. This changed the original scene. I was no longer using Davi’s scooter. I liked the idea of using the airplane as if it was a carnival musical hat, a mask, a totem, a powerful magic offering that I carried on top of my head.

I have always had an obsession with my head. Later on in life and in spiritual experiences I learned that the head is central in Candomblé, Umbanda and other spiritual rituals (see 4.2.1). The head guides the life of the initiated and in rituals the initiated “feed” the head of the orixás and other entities with food, drinks, flowers and in some cases, animals. A *Cabeça feita*, “made head” is a name for an initiated *filho-de-santo* protected by the orixás.

Perhaps the airplane is my version of Carmen Miranda’s bananas, but with *cafona* music⁷² and wings?—a post-modern, dislocated and sublime Carmen Miranda? I decided to perform in Portuguese and English, and my voice and Davi’s voice were recorded in a variety of ways, simulating radio communication and interference. The toy’s music was also recorded and mixed with the text by the sound designer. During the performance of the scene there was a projection on a screen of the toy that looked immense and so blue. I really loved the airplane images and sound effects. There is something of desistence and revelation.

The music was a wobbly and appropriately toy-like rendition of “What a Wonderful World” by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss—very sentimental, *cafona*, and moving. The projected images looked funny and serious at the same time and I question: Am I serious or not? Am I a performance artist or not? Is Josefina a singer or a mouse, a simple mouse? Is this *new-media art* or not? Is it *technological post-modern theatre* or not? *Tupi* or not *tupi*? Am I an Indigenous fascinated with civilization and toy airplanes, or not?

In the meantime I would say: what a wonderful world! But please understand I am not too serious about that exclamation. I jump out of the plane safely and the plane crashes at the end of the story—thanks to the flight controller for the instructions.

9.6.5 The macho assailant, violence & exploitation

In front of the audience, I stick a large black moustache to my top lip whilst reciting a poem about love, a completely anthropophagic love which *come o meu travesseiro*, eats my pillow, *come a meu terno*, eats my suit, *come o meu medo da morte*, eats my fear of death, among other things (see 10.5). I walk in the direction of a kind of offering that has already been in place on the stage since the beginning of the play. Under these artificial, red

⁷² Fortuitously, the plane plays a version of “What a Wonderful World” by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss.

flowers there is a gun. *A cada flor retirada dublo uma das frases desse poema faminto*. As each flower is picked up, I mime the words from one of the phrases from this starving poem. After this, with the gun in my hand and slowly, between seductive smiles at the audience and frightening laughter typical of children's pantomimes, I walk towards the cot which is shrouded on the railings by dolls. I pull up one of the dolls by the hair and point the gun at her head. I recite in Portuguese a text from the play about Medeia called "Gota d'Água" by Paulo Pontes and Chico Buarque, the part about Medeia's—Joana in this version—revenge on *Jasão*. The play was famously but wonderfully over-acted by Bibi Ferreira in the mid-70s in Brazil. At the end of the scene, after running around the cot several times and pulling the doll's hair, the chauvinist and violent Latin man shrieks and drops the doll and the gun. Immediately, by again donning mouse ears, he is transformed back into Josefine and she, walks to the pink armchair and tells a story about her first childhood love, Guilherme. The characters are so autobiographical they are always the "I" in a cultural context, acting out as they do in the square in which I grew up, in Uberaba.

In the scene with the macho *Senhor Bibi Ferreira*, my intention was to portray the violence in Brazil. This scene is based on a story told me by my mother. She told me that, very frequently in Brazil, people press the intercom in houses and apartments and pretend to be delivering flowers. When the person opens the door, there is a gun behind the flowers. These people are robbed and sometimes wounded or killed. There are also several cases of Brazilian prostitutes, male and female, seducing lonely, naive people under false promises. They then kill these lonely people for an old car, an old laptop or 1,000 *reais*.⁷³

This scene attempts to express the relationship between love and violence, lies and cheating. All moments in the scene are *multiplicáveis*, transformable into multiple new outcomes, with many different meanings. This is mainly because they were inspired and created by a hybrid form, a mosaic of Brazilian experience, built on tales of violence, misery, corruption, literature and personal references.

⁷³ Brazilian "Real" currency. R\$1000 is valued at approximately AU\$620.

9.6.6 José Eduardo, bananas and the supremacy of the fox hunters

Ai caramba! What an email José Eduardo Garcia de Moraes sent me! It was just after the bomb attacks in London in 2005. He said that he felt sorry for the victims but found it absurd, seeing on television, the English giving cups of tea to the injured.

I had recently returned to Australia from field research in Brazil where I discussed with José Eduardo the idea of bringing a huge carnival dress back from Brazil for my performance. José Eduardo is a Brazilian performance and conceptual artist, a friend, and to me, something of a genius.⁷⁴ After the assault on my brother and his son (see Offering 1) I lost interest in Carnival and found it too festive to perform and the dress too heavy to take to Australia. I was depressed and very disappointed with Brazil and its violence. Alone in Australia, I was homesick and without collaborators. I later wrote to José Eduardo complaining and explaining why I regretted not bringing the dress from Brazil. In reply, José Eduardo sent me this cheerful email that was both a comment on the terrorist attacks and an ironic, vigorous suggestion for performance—a five or six-hour performance-art piece, in his own personal style.

This scene involves me playing José Eduardo describing the performance-art piece by telephone (see 10.6). He uses glasses very similar in style to the ones I use in the play. I would love to have performed it exactly as he suggested but bananas in Australia were extremely expensive at the time⁷⁵ and time was short. It would be impossible! Bananas in Brazil are much cheaper! So much so that to call someone a *banana* in Brazil is to call them “worthless”. You can also “give a banana” to someone—*da uma banana pra ele!*—give him a banana!—give him nothing, certainly no satisfaction.

The performance ideas in José Eduardo’s email were clear and clever, political, provoking and bravely ridiculous. His email was inspiring because it talks about Brazil and how different people raised in Brazil and with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds have little in common. He also talks about the idea that the true artist never dies. There was indeed *still time to do Maria Banana!* If I couldn’t manage to bring the carnival dress from Brazil and if had

⁷⁴ See <http://br.geocities.com/garciademoraes>.

⁷⁵ Because of cyclones in Queensland wiping out the banana crop.

doubts about acting why not peel thousands of bananas and sit on them for hours and hours? I will do that one day.

Below is José Eduardo's letter reproduced in full and with his consent. The letter was ultimately translated to form part of the script for *Little World* (see 10.6):

a palavra arrependimento não existe na lingua arte ... estou muito antenado e consegui colocar na prova de artes da minha escola duas questões que apresentam a coca-cola no meu trabalho de arte como arma (bomba), e que o aluno deve saber que a questão estética é um meio para se provocar a questão do "yes" e do "yes" e do sempre "yes" ... comentei com um amigo ... os ingleses e todos os caçadores de raposas subestimam a inteligência do árabes e de todos os outros povos ... imagina o que os africanos não faram quando começarem a colocar bombas nos paús! Adeus a supremacia caçadora de raposas. Agora, por outro lado eu fico triste com estas coisas, mas vê na televisão as pessoas servindo chá para as vítimas!? Não sei, Simone, mas se nós artistas, não nos antenarmos, vamos morrer igual bombinha de São João que falha por causa da humidade ... Portanto, ainda dá tempo de você fazer a Maria Banana, sambanda igual a Carmem Miranda, mas ao contrário desta, sentando literalmente nas bananas ... por que o nosso maior humor e horror é que não sabemos como atirar dinamites ... Cena 1: você descasca milhares de bananas depois toma distância e vem correndo e pula encima da bananas ... Cena 2: como idiôta que você é, todos os moradores da república das bananas são idiôtas ... você escolhe uma banana e começa a cochá-la, como uma galinha que choca um ovinho ... Cena 3: para surpresa da platéia nasce uma galinha júdia e outra árabe ... A lição que podemos tirar desta fábula é a de que, eu não sei absurdamente o que ... o que uma galinha júdia criada no Brasil tem com uma galinha árabe criada no Brasil? Os ingleses, como um povo de ônibus de dois andares saberão certamente qual chá tomar nesta ocasião! Beijos queridos, do teu José Eduardo' (depois escrevo mais)

The idea of the dress discussed with Eduardo, was in fact resurrected later with Carlos Gomes (see Figure 10.28 and sections 9.6.19 and 10.15). The many flowers on the dress had been Eduardo's idea and seemed to symbolise the artificial flowers used in Brazilian funerals—the dress becoming both festive and deathly.

9.6.7 Dinosaurs, false teeth, sweets and kangaroos

É por isso que existe esse fascínio pela antropofagia. This is why a fascination for anthropophagy exists. Because within it, everything is reinvented, revisited and multiplied. So I created this sweet, animalistic version of myself, childlike, sometimes seductive and dressed as a kangaroo

inside a white cot. This is where I spent the first few days of my life at *Praça Estevao Pucci*, number 5, the city of Dinosaurs, in Uberaba, Minas Gerais.

This is how I felt when I arrived in Australia: *devo aprender a falar*, I must learn how to speak, *onde estão os meus brinquedos?*, where are my toys?, *Cade os Dinossauros?* Where are the Dinosaurs? and *como são gentis os Kangurus!* How nice the kangaroos are!

All the seduction that the other can exercise over you and all the non-understanding of another manifest in a universe apart, where the toys become the only instrument of communication and micro training for the actor. So many marks/signs were required to turn toys on and off, take moustaches off, put false teeth in, gunpowder in guns, leaving sweets semi-wrapped so that I could suck them at the right time, at the exact moment where a relationship could be established with a member of the audience:

Fortunately or unfortunately, I unknowingly chose one of my examiners and told her she should suck the sweet at night, every night for several days. This would do her lots of good and this would play a part in transforming her life. This is done at *São Cosme* and *Damião* rituals in Brazil, in centres of Umbanda. The mediums approach people who need spiritual and physical help and throw *guaraná* on their bodies. They suck sweets and give them to them like lucky charms for protection and spiritual strength.

The nun's trance shows a multicultural Brazilian faith. Religious anthropophagy is part of culture and the arts in Brazil and amidst the gunshots and the macumba/voodoo, Brazil is still one of the largest Catholic countries in the world. I wanted to be a Catholic when I was a child and I would go to church. I thought of becoming a nun because of the clothes and the theatricality of the Mass. The *Umbandistas* are Christians and Jesus is called Oxalá in the Umbanda ritual. This vampire nun, with a furious, childlike sweetness, chews her own plastic teeth and throws them up at the end of her scene. Ultimately she confesses that the chicken is the main character, just as objects and sacrifice are fundamental in the rituals. Everything is a fetish and this displays the faith that Brazilians hold.

My son tells me he left Brazil to come to Australia with faith, and returned some four years later without faith. This was one incredible change he experienced living abroad. I myself do not know if the nun has faith

despite her claims that she never lost it. She is immortal and is reborn and after each gun shot. She gets up, after each fall, after every shot she receives she comes back stronger. Her faith grows and grows.

9.6.8 The Chicken in *Little World*

E a galinha? O ovo é o grande sacrifício da galinha. O ovo é a cruz que a galinha carrega na vida. O ovo é o sonho inatingível da galinha. A galinha ama o ovo.

[And the chicken? The egg is the chicken's greatest sacrifice. The egg is the cross the chicken carries in life. The egg is the chicken's unreachable dream. The chicken loves the egg.]

— Clarice Lispector
(Lispector 1971b)

The chicken was purchased in a toy store for dogs. To have a dog is an unachievable dream for someone on a student visa and who has moved to a small, one-bedroom unit. In actual fact it was my son who wanted the dog. So, as well as visiting toy stores we also started going to toy stores for dogs. In search of an impossible dog, I found a typical *carioca*⁷⁶ chicken. It wore a bikini with pink polka dots and I was sure that, because of small size of the bikini (beloved in Brazil) the chicken was destined to be a central object of the play. I was certain too that this was a Brazilian chicken, a chicken from Ipanema—*Galinha de Ipanema*—but also a sacrificial chicken from the Afro-Brazilian rituals and the imaginary rituals from my childhood. The sound it made was perfect, supernatural, ecstatic, simply fascinating, hyper-real, quasi-ritualistic!

I am, for some moments, in the La Mama theatre, not only Kafka's *Josefine*, Clarice Lispector's *Macabéa*; I am the sacrificial, Brazilian, anthropophagic chicken. I carry the thesis without feeling; I act without feeling just as the chicken carries the egg, without seeing anything, completely possessed and black. No, she is not black, that is a lie. She is colourful and as I mentioned above she has pink polka dots. I love pink as can be seen elsewhere in the text. The chair where the confessions are made is also pink. I found out that my father loved pink. My mother only told me this after his death.

⁷⁶ From Rio de Janeiro

In Brazil, the black chicken carries powerful, mystical, and sometimes terrifying voodoo connotations. *As pessoas pretas também podem ter inúmeras conotações no Brasil*, Black people can also carry many connotations in Brazil. Black chickens are used for witchcraft on street corners. They are offered together with cigarettes, red flowers and other typical Brazilian foods such as farofa⁷⁷ to entities. The entities are those of strength, linked to sexual energy and the power to make things move: Exú and Pomba Gira (see Offering 4).

The egg is the chicken's suffering, as Clarice Lispector says (Lispector 1971b). This chicken, a plastic object, is alive on set, *apesar de ela apenas chinar e atuar quando pisada pela freira em transe*, yet she squeaks and acts only when trodden on by the nun in a trance. *Ela chia, fui pisada?* She squeaks, was I trodden on? *Sim porque me senti algumas vezes também como uma galinha de biquínis que mais do que falar em inglês consegue chinar melhor*. Yes because I also sometimes feel like a chicken in a bikini that does a better job of chicken sounds than she does of speaking English.

The macumba nun treads on the chicken and is bombarded by shots from cannons in the soundscape and pistols handed out to the public. The shots are ritualistic, musical rhythms like the strike of *atabaque* hand-drums used in Candomblé. Without music there is no trance, no ritual and magic is impossible. This performance is extremely driven by music and the soundtrack is fundamental and is in constant dialogue challenging both the performer and the scene.

9.6.9 Freira Josefina⁷⁸—Pomba Gira—Erê

Is a nun a nun? How can we decipher a nun-mouse voodoo-practitioner? A *Josefine* is somebody who believes the most in what she is and who pretends the most to be what she really is. In this way she is like an actress or, in Kafka's case, a singer (see 7.2). *Uma Josefina é alguém que mais acredita no que é, que mais finge ser do que é realmente, desse modo sendo uma atriz ou no caso do Kafka, uma cantora*. Josefina is an out-of-place singer just as Kafka is. (she is?) Someone who writes or speaks, or sings in an Other language. I sing in Portuguese, in English and in invented languages—I sing as an "other", someone who is apparently not me, a

⁷⁷ A fried mixture of *farinha* (manioc—cassava—flour) and other ingredients such as dried meat.

⁷⁸ Mother Josefina

stranger, a foreigner. But someone who is not even an outsider. An outsider artist has an established place—he/she is *fora*, “outside”—and people have to throw lifejackets. But Josefina is not exactly outside. She has an adoring audience, although she is always under threat of being exposed as an imposter. She is in a theatre, she has a cot, a baby kangaroo mask, a high chair, sweets and lollipops in a red case, plastic guns, toys and a mouse-narrator in her memory which questions her constantly. Is she really an artist? Or is she an impostor?

Can a nun-Josefine incorporate an Afro-Brazilian entity that represents sexuality? Can an anthropophagic Brazilian, catholic, nun incorporate an entity of the spirit of children called *Erê* or *São Cosme* and *Damião*? Yes she can. In Brazil and in contemporary cross-cultural theatre, heresy is always a possibility. *Josefina é impossível*, Josefina is “impossible”.

9.6.10 Anthropophagic Vampire

The nun is an anthropophagic. She ate Brazilian post-modern Catholicism, Umbanda, Candomblé, theatre-dance, anthropophagy itself, traditional theatre, realism, Brazilian soap opera, butoh, ballet, performance art, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, autoethnography, Cixous and all the other references in this research—*ao molho pardo*. This is a performance offering, a strange food but well seasoned; perhaps even funny but difficult to digest. You need to have a dinosaur’s stomach. The nun confesses, bites, licks, dribbles, eats, laughs, blesses, curses and makes people laugh. She is in trance; she stands and falls down, stands again, shivers and intrigues. She survives the shots from the audience and the melancholic childhood sentimentalisms of the actress-author. If there is one thing that happens in Candomblé, it is food and eating. Each Saint has a specific food. Food is fundamental to this religion and without it, nothing happens. There is no trance. There is no magic. There is no party. This is another important point and it must be clear: carnival and Afro-Brazilian religions are rigorously festive and lively and there is no contradiction in this. The Afro-Brazilian rituals are a fascinating party and full of happy intensities. I sought to achieve this party state with *Little World*.

9.6.11 Examiners, audience and *pequi*

In the *Little World* performance, audience members (including the examiners) are part of the meal. Josefina-Simone is an anti-heroine like

Lispector's Macabéa and risks not knowing how to defend or explain herself and communicate; she also risks not knowing how to "bite" the audience, to draw blood. She feels panic, hunger, doubts, pleasure and offers herself to the examiners with their sharp vampire teeth. She feels herself to be like *peque*, a *cerrado*⁷⁹ fruit—bright yellow and full of sharp splinters at the core—which while dangerous to eat it is impossibly tasty when shaved carefully and cooked with rice. As with Macabéa, Simone lacks the articulation of language because she is and always will be a foreigner, ridiculous, *uma caipira*—a girl from the countryside, inadequate and always the "Other"; she is a Macabéa who types her thesis using two fingers, who could be run-over and killed because she doesn't understand the traffic signs. Josefine, the little mouse and Macabéa cross the street and are tragically run over after delighting blindly in the beauty of Marvelous Melbourne.

9.6.12 The little world of the dolls

Carlos Gomes and I made compositions with tiny, funny, weird, sweet toys. We put them in the cot and filmed: a little blond girl having her leg bitten by a crocodile; soldiers with guns attacking farm animals; dolls with moustaches; and sexual images with insects and other little creatures—chickens and bananas.

During the show I pretended that I was filming these images live with a camera connected to the theatre projector (see 10.8). It was the *Little World*, my little universe that appeared to be so immense to me. Are you real or are you a duck?

That's the question. Is this little universe to be taken so seriously? Is the world a Brazilian soccer ball about to explode? What would you do if your *Little World* was as real as a mechanic chicken? Would you keep laying eggs? Would you keep performing or would you pretend that?

9.6.13 Pink

Josefine sits in a child's pink armchair and tells her story, the real story of a woman—me—who loves pink (see 10.9). I love pink, and she repeats the phrase all over the scene—a scene about daily-life, frustration, being a women and consumerism. It also refers to the displacement of being in Perth, missing the culture of Melbourne and the artists and friends I had met there.

⁷⁹ Bushland of the seasonally dry Brazilian interior.

She, like me, is a foreigner (a mouse), an alien who is recognized only when she wears her wonderful bright pink jacket from Melbourne. She is not from Melbourne herself. But she looks *funky* wearing the jacket and it brings her prestige in Perth, where she feels ignored. The pink jacket is an act of revolt by Josefine (the performer-mouse), she with her mouse ears and her chic, black and artistic, glamorous dress. Josefine speaks with a toy megaphone that alters her voice. The megaphone creates a further artificiality to the scene and makes her more absurd. I am dressed as a character but the text is about an imaginary "me", "Simone". I am genuinely revolted in Perth and "I" Simone am invisible. The pink jacket brings back my voice and presence, ironically transformed and empowered. It gives volume and a hyper-reality. A Melbournian revolution in Perth and a comic foreigner-performer with a child's megaphone; that's the message! I am an alien-Brazilian who looks *cooler* and more familiar to Australians from Perth when wearing a pink jacket from Melbourne. Conclusions: everybody likes Melbourne. Everybody likes pink.

9.6.14 Monster

This scene (see 10.10) starts in the pink arm chair and finishes inside the white cot. It is based on performance I created in Brazil, many years ago. I use a text by Hilda Hilst and reinvent it here, relating my body movements to this set design defined by the cot, the chair and toys.

I consider this scene a cliché of myself and my performance style. I need to perform this almost as an addiction. It is a kind of icon in my carrier and like Josefine, I perform myself acting, I perform me as an actor, me in the past, me when I was a real actor? In the cot, I am positioned at my birth as an artist, where everything started and where I began devouring styles and concepts. I perform me performing. It is self-ironic. I am still the contortionist, the physical theatre person, "the actor who will never die", as José Celso Martinez Corrêa⁸⁰ told me once just after Davi was born. I went to see a talk he gave in Brasília and when he saw me he hugged me, spun with me, looked at me and said "the actor didn't die!". The post-modern experimental performer is still alive even if she is almost forty, a researcher and an academic!

No the actor didn't die. She is a mother, a lecturer and she is still a clown, a scary monster and a little child sucking her *pirulito*, lollypop. *O Bicho*

⁸⁰ Zé Celso.

Medonho, "The Scary Monster" performance was staged many times. It is a story by Hilda Hilst, a contemporary wonderful Brazilian writer. The text is a story of a little boy who is eaten by a monster while trying to save a chrysanthemum that is about to fall in the river. The monster is waiting to devour him because he is hungry. The scary monster prays and waits for the child.

At the end there is a message: "there is no salvation," "keep on sucking your lollypop!" That's it, whatever you do, whatever you choose, you'll end up being devoured. Is this too, cannibal?

9.6.15 Macabéa

*Eu Macabeo, tu Macabeas, ele Macabea, nós Macabeamos, vós Macabeais, eles Macabeam*⁸¹. Macabear is a verb that means in English "to Macabéa". Macabéa is a state-of-mind. Macabéa is in everybody." Who has never felt like a Macabéa?" I read that once somewhere on the internet and thought: yes it is true. The world is full of Macabéas. I don't need to talk more about Macabéa. I've had Macabea's courage (does she have courage?) throughout this research. I want to kill Macabéa but I can't. I hate Macabéa. I love Macabéa. Am I a Macabéa for being like the transparent lizard who looks weak but resists danger by going unnoticed? Once you cut the lizard's tail it grows again! Macabéa is pure poetry and abjection, she is the uncanny herself. She is what we don't understand but what keeps us researching and performing. She is a chicken without the egg. She has no purpose. She is *Maria Banana*. Macabéa's destiny is to be a star. It means to die. Is that the destiny of us all?

Macabéa's mask was a decisive element in the composition of the character in *Little World III* (see Section 10.11). Strangely she looked quite dead before she started walking, and even if she looked quite seductive, feminine and mysterious, she had a Halloween look. I know there are connections between death, the abject and the feminine. Why does Macabéa have to be a woman? This is my last feminist moment before I finish this work.

Macabéa looks too feminine and a bit dead. She is captivating this way. I found this mask in a party shop in Melbourne. She is still, delicate and super

⁸¹ Conjugations of a fictitious Portuguese verb Macabear and not fully translatable into English.

feminine. She doesn't understand the traffic lights toy signaling STOP! Is she stupid? Is the feminine a dummy?! *Esta vermelho! Pare! Vamos! Espera!*—It's red, stop! Lets go! Wait!—the toy traffic light orders but she pays no attention. She passes through the big-city streets of the Melbourne noticing and understanding nothing. She can't read the signs. Is this São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro? Might be Brasilia?! Macabéa walks holding her *malinha vermelha*, little red suitcase—the same case used by Josefina and the nun Irmã Rotina. Are they the same person? Macabéa is a nun, she is a fake actor, she is a performer, she is a starving and anemic Carmen Miranda, she is an anonymous foreigner crossing the road in Melbourne, São Paulo or Brasilia and being killed by a car shortly after consulting a clairvoyant. Macabéa goes and comes without understanding anything, where to go or why. What is the meaning? Is there any meaning? What is inside her little red suitcase? Perhaps Coca Cola and plastic hotdogs—plastic teeth? Does she rehearse in front of the mirror? Does she want to be an actor? Is she a fool? Is Macabéa an offering in the miracles room in Salvador? Is she a cannibal? Perhaps, inside the suitcase, there is a letter from her ex-boyfriend telling her how useless and stupid she is. In the performance Macabéa also comes from the cot, her hometown, her country. Slowly and mysteriously just after the scary monster disappears, she emerges and looks. She observes. She dislocates. What? What for? How is she displaced so elegantly? Is she Clarice Lispector herself? Was she eaten by the scary monster? Was she already dead and started walking? Are we all seeing the invisible?

She crosses the road. She is on the road. The toy traffic light is serious. It speaks in three different languages, Spanish, English and French: "stop, wait, go!" She pays no attention. Macabéa wake up! She gets confused, the sound track gets chaotic, so many sounds, horns, noises! A realistic sound of a car crash blasts loudly! There's a sound like someone slipping on a banana peel—is it a cartoon? Is it reality? Macabéa is violently crushed by *o príncipe dela*, her prince, in a limousine. In the performance we just hear the noise of the big car. Macabéa dies at the same time she becomes a star. "Exactly" like Madame Carlota, the ex-prostitute and fake-clairvoyant predicted, just before she crossed the road in search of her dreams: she ironically "becomes a star".

9.6.16 Flor—a flower

The movement piece performed during the playing of *Carinhoso* (see 10.12) is another reinterpretation and reassessment of the work I presented

many years before (see 8.7). Again I perform “Simone Reis” in the nineties in Brasilia. Did it sound real? Is she a fake? Is Josefina an actor? Flor was/is a work about love—a woman who falls in love madly for something impossible, the impossible love. The unpredictable and inaccessible theme encouraged me to create tense and contorted movements at that time. I think since I was five I started falling in love—is it being an artist, being Latin or being Macabéa? There is also an element of anthropophagy in this early performance: I eat a flower and vomit this flower. When I created this it sounded much more radical to me and the audience. I remember the reactions: “it is grotesque”; “I couldn’t stay till the end since I felt like vomiting”; “is she mad?” I am sick of this. I don’t know how radical I need to be anymore. I don’t have the naive-revolt-fantasy I had in the nineties. I believed then much more in suffering (I was very much influenced by Butoh at that time) on the stage than now. I don’t want to distress or to shock.

Flor was performed at La Mama as a memory. Who is Josefine? Is she a performer or she is only piping? Is she an actor or has she become a serious academic? Does she take herself too seriously? If she is a real radical performer, can she eat a real flower while dancing and vomit it? It is difficult to talk about this piece. I feel like crying. *Meu coração não sei porque bate feliz quando te ve*. I love this music called “Carinhoso”. It is beautiful I know. I am still a radical *cafona*. *Viva o amor*. My heart still beats. I don’t know why.

9.6.17 Galinhada⁸²

That’s when the mechanical chicken starts laying eggs (see 10.13). It is an exciting moment. It is grandiosely phony, false. I walk and fetch the toy electric chicken and pretend it’s under my control—especially the egg-laying—as a result of my magical powers. This is thanks to my actor’s training. I trained for years to achieve this amazing technique. I am a professional artist. I am an authentic actor. But I have some questions:

Is this magic? Again, Josefine’s credentials are on the line—am I a real magician or a fake? Is she really laying the eggs? Are the eggs real? Does the performer-me-Josefine-magician really believe she/I is/am doing all these circus tricks? Is she a professional trickster? Is Simone Josefine, a *Maria Banana* or a mechanical chicken? Is the fake chicken a real trained virtuoso

⁸² A delicious *Mineira* dish—from Minas Gerais—made with browned chicken, caramelised onions and rice.

performer? After each egg is laid I thank the audience for their attention and immediately ask them to clap. Is this real circus?

Ultimately the chicken is whisked from the stage and the magician (me) thanks happily (with dizzy ballerina gesturers) the audience for their cooperation. She looks moved, thankful and happy. She looks like a non-trained ballerina, a fake *Circus Oz* acrobat, a child magician believing she has deceived her audience.

9.6.18 Family slide show

I found this toy slide-projector irresistible—would it make my work look more technological? More like contemporary theatre? More about projection and bodies in movement—that new-media stuff?

I found this toy incredibly interesting and immediately set upon it “to devour” it. I bought it without thinking—a surreal slide projector with many choices of slide carrousels (ones with flowers, animals, cartoons, skeletons, food etc.). The skeleton one looked spooky—that’s it! Is there any logic in art? No, José Eduardo said once.

In the first rehearsal with the projector I decided that those images would represent my family and I—a slide show of the family. I had already written the text, many texts, too much about my family (father, mother, grandfather, cousin, child, friends). What about the images?! Were they real? Were these stories genuine? Do they exist? Do I exist? Does Brazil exist? Does Australia exist? I will prove it!

The texts were recorded and incorporated into the soundscape. In the performance I held the slide-projector and changed the images according to the recorded text. It looked serious although probably absurd. Some people laughed perhaps because of the connections I made between images and text: my father as the skeleton of a dinosaur, me as a monkey, my child as crocodile? Who is alive? Who is dead? Are we all mixed, as if it was a spiritual meeting?

It is also important to notice that there is a bit more interaction between performer and audience in this scene. I ask an audience member to hold the projector and I hold a small white screen in front of my chest. I look at the

screen smiling adoringly and affectionately to my dear relatives' images. Finally on the last slide of this family slide show I say: "and this is me!"

So the show must go on!

9.6.19 Tragic, cross-cultural hybridism? Or will she dance Samba.

I spoke earlier of tragedy, I don't know ... It seems that hybridism means *interbreeding* and comes from Greek.⁸³ When someone is saying something that you don't understand, in Brazil we say that person is *falando grego*, "talking Greek".⁸⁴ I shouldn't talk about the Greeks now, nor the Brazilians, or about hybridism or cannibalism, even though I am tempted because, otherwise, I will need to write at least a hundred and eighty thousand words and, possibly, die tragically at the end. But there is another Latin risk: I can "dance samba"; get up and fall like I do in the video projected at La Mama after the slide show (see 10.15). This samba was a distorted samba, a samba-butoh, an apparition of Carmen Miranda, alienated and out-of-place and wearing José Eduardo's dress. I decided to dance (rising and falling) that Brazilian samba, happily at the end of the performance on a slippery dance floor, as this is one of the biggest and most beautiful and sometimes most irritating clichés of Brazil. *Caramba!* Gosh! There is a risk in everything! Did you know that the verb "sambar" as well as meaning "to dance samba" can also mean "to fail" in Portuguese?

9.6.20 The ideal Brazilian woman?

It is the most Brazilian moment of the play and while the Carnival projection is playing, I place a crown of soccer balls on my head; a reinvention of Carmen Miranda replacing the fruit. Brazilian women are obsessed with being sexy and pretty; that's Brazil: plastic surgery, botox, bolox! Balltox! A logical progression and cheaper than fortifying breasts and bum with silicone! Why not use these soft little soccer balls? It is easy and fast, and you will look gorgeous *querida*, darling! I am a gorgeous Josefine. A fake Brazilian. A fake *sambista desfilando na avenida*, a sambista catwalking the street.

⁸³ L. *hybrida*: "offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar, child of a freeman and a slave"; thought to be a loan word from Gk. ὑβρις *hubris*, hubris, pride (cf. nemesis). (OED).

⁸⁴ "... for mine own part, it was Greek to me"—in *Julius Caesar*, William Shakespeare.

That's the message: *futebol*—soccer, Carnival and beautiful women. The taxi drivers are right. The people know what is good (says Zé Celso: *o povo sabe o que é bom!*) *Ok nós temos bananas! Viva o Brazil!* That's the solution: soccer balls, breasts and a soccer ball bum! That's the cliché and I am a cliché! That's the truth about Brazilian culture. It is *wonderful, marvelous* as João Gilberto sings. Contradictorily the sambista stumbles clumsily on the screen behind me. *Brasil meu Brasil Brasileiro ...*

Que tragédia! What a tragedy! Macabéa returns. Josefine and Macabéa. I don't dance samba, I don't dance samba ai ai ai ai! I am falling. *Sim eu sou uma palhaça ainda.* Yes I am still a clown. I don't dance samba ai ... But I dance. I don't act but I act. I am not an academic but I am. It is not a performance but it is.

Finally, right at the very end, that's not Josefine, that's not Macabéa ... That's me. The end.

9.7 Little World III Collaborators

9.7.1 Carlos Gomes

The Sydney-based Brazilian director Carlos Gomes' contribution was very important in consolidating and arranging the many individual scenes I had created in preparation for the performance. He came to work with me with assistance from the Brazilian Consulate in Sydney. The chance to work with Carlos was wonderful. Carlos is accustomed to directing actors with unique performance languages—his work with Butoh dancer Yumi Umiuare⁸⁵ encouraged me to make contact with Carlos in the first place. I could never cope with an *old-school*, prescriptive director.

Working with Carlos presented the promise of *relocating my own dislocation* with somebody who spoke my language in Australia—and Brazilian artists are rare in Australia. With his insight into Brazilian culture he was a unique and inspiring witness to my "Macabear"⁸⁶ in Australia. I think for Carlos too, it was an exciting opportunity to work with a Brazilian performer. He complained once that it was difficult for Australian actors to understand when he asked them to go into a trance! Carlos is a creative director and he understood my artistic language with ease and with good humour.

⁸⁵ See www.yumi.com.au

⁸⁶ See Section 9.6.15.

When Carlos arrived in Melbourne to commence work on *Little World*, we were happy to be able to discuss the loneliness of being a Brazilian artist in Australia, and shared similar feelings of dislocation; it helped us to understand one another. It is absurd how quickly a stranger can seem familiar, like a cousin from childhood. Carlos acted as an informed witness to my work, providing feedback as I worked through the minutiae of movement and staging. His rigour and professionalism, in creating a familiar and friendly environment (relaxing and always playful) helped shaped the final version and performance of *Little World*.

Carlos also served with me as production designer in *Little World* devising the simple set of cot, toys and projection screen.

9.7.2 Sandra Long

Sandra Long acted as dramaturge in *Little World* and we met twice a week in the period Carlos Gomes was in Melbourne. Sandra has long-standing experience in working with foreign artists in Melbourne and working abroad; she speaks Indonesian, and has developed a number of significant projects in Indonesia, so she is familiar with the problems and possibilities of translation. Sandra helped a great deal, and with suggestions for the text, particularly with the English. Sometimes what sounds funny for Brazilians is not for Australians and vice versa! Sandra lent an Australian ear to the work.

9.7.3 Alexandre Malta

Alexandre Malta, the lighting designer, arrived in the final stages of the production. If you haven't already guessed from his name, he is a Brazilian, and perhaps this contributed to him *getting the message* very fast. Alexandre is also a consummate professional, a pleasure to work with, and he made a beautiful lighting design. Together with Carlos, we formed a tight group of homesick Brazilian artists in Melbourne, celebrating our difficult but joyous artistic and personal dislocations, together.

9.7.4 Iain Mott

Iain Mott worked as a sound designer on *Little World I* and on the final *Little World III*, and I found his artistic contribution inspiring and fundamental to the performance. Music was important, especially because of the hybridism explored which gave expression to my myriad multicultural voices. Iain used

as his source material: popular Brazilian music, or *MPB*⁸⁷ as it is known in Brazil; the sounds of the many toys collected for the performance; my own voice and that of my son Davi; and a number of prerecorded sound effects. The sound design provoked a powerful interaction. I didn't want to respond in an obvious way, as a traditional "dancer" to the sound track, and it challenged me to create singular possibilities in performance movements, voices and acting nuances for the many mutable characters I was playing while interacting with the sound design.⁸⁸

9.8 Production Materials

The production materials for *Little World* included a variety of children's toys and furniture and regular theatrical costumes. The toys and furniture were selected during numerous buying trips over a three year period toy and party-supply shops. Many toys were not ultimately used in the final production however all were important to the development of scenes in *Little World* and in many ways influenced the shape of the production. Some toys were actively procured to suit the requirements of various scenes and characters—for example the Mickey Mouse ears for *Josefine* and the grotesque feminine mask for *Macabéa*. An example of a fortuitous encounter with a toy is that of the toy slide projector with its strange images of apes, fossils and skeletons. The projector and its images were used to perform a slide show in the performance, introducing various members of my family to the audience. A second toy obtained by chance was a mechanical chicken. This chicken enabled the invention of a scene containing *false-magic* tricks, whereby the chicken laid eggs under my command. The toy aeroplane-tricycle also became central to the production and was used as a *butoh-Carmen Miranda-style* prop, symbolising travel, exoticism, displacement, disorientation and helplessness.

9.8.1 Costume materials

- Black and white short skirt
- Carnival dress with plastic flowers and plants
- Complete nun's habit
- False moustaches
- Grotesque feminine mask
- Kangaroo mask
- Long backless black dress
- Micky Mouse ears

⁸⁷ *Música Popular Brasileira*

⁸⁸ See also www.reverberant.com for Iain Mott's work.

Plastic teeth—three pairs: vampire and two other grotesque styles
Superman gloves
Tamancos—Brazilian platform shoes
Toy maid's apron
Wire-frame hat with under-sized soccer balls

9.8.2 Furniture

Child's cot
Pink child's armchair with ottoman

9.8.3 Toys

Bubble makers
Bubble making toy lawn-mower
Candles
Cap guns
Clockwork music boxes (a variety)
Crawling and crying baby doll
Dolls (a variety/multiethnic)
Electronic musical typewriter with mice playing the keys
Electronic chicken with eggs and music
Fofoletes—tiny dolls from Brazil
Hula-hoop
Jesus doll
Musical aeroplane tricycle
Novelty glasses, one mock-conservative type with pictures of male eyes in place of each glass, the other with plastic eyes on springs
Pink fluffy toy telephone with novelty ring-tones
Pink rose (real)
Plastic banana
Plastic iron-bar
Plastic red flowers
Rubber chicken (for dogs)
Small red suitcase with lollies and cap-guns
Speech altering megaphone
Tin clockwork circus monkey, duck, crocodile
Toy castanets in shape of hands
Toy clockwork television with sliding image of zoo animals
Toy lion with synthetic lion's roar
Toy skeletons
Toy slide projector
Toy soldiers
Toy traffic light
Toy video/film camera

9.8.4 Other Objects

Pink rose (real)

Offering 10. Little World Script

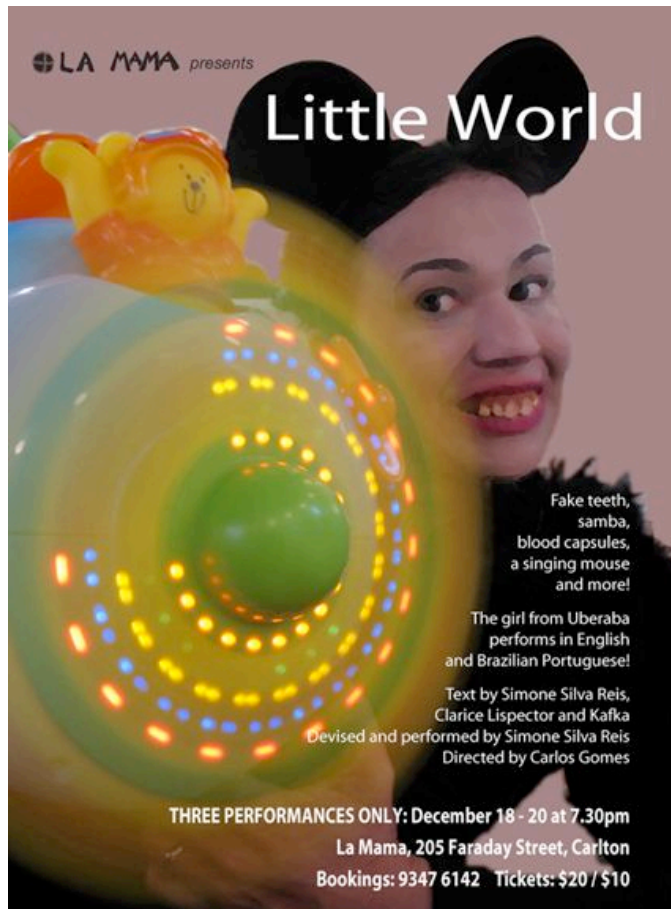


Figure 10.1 *Little World* Poster from La Mama production

Set: the small room is strewn with toys. A fluffy pink toy telephone sits next to a small, pink, child's armchair sits stage left, and at stage right, is a white cot, also strewn with toys. Other toys include a tri-lingual traffic light which *speaks* French, English and Spanish, an electric tiger, a bubble blowing toy lawnmower, singing baby; large plastic aeroplane which lights up and many windup toys. Upstage a white screen is hung for projection. Under the staircase is an installation of suspended doll's body parts.

10.1 A empregada e Roberto Carlos

Action: Simone, who at first goes unnoticed, is playing in the cot, surrounded by toys. She is wearing a kangaroo mask and a long black dress.



Figure 10.2 Kangaroo plays music boxes (photo Pina Raiola)

She sets toys in motion, wind-up and electric musical toys, and allows them to play. She takes off the mask revealing fake teeth. She starts to sing underneath the toys, her voice distorted by the teeth. It is a Brazilian love song by the *legendary* Roberto Carlos.⁸⁹

Simone:

Meu amor há quanto tempo
Eu não falo com você
Isto só me deixa triste
E sem vontade de viver

E o meu amor que é puro
Pode crer meu bem eu juro
É tão grande que duvido
Que outro igual possa haver
Tanta coisa boa existe
E eu aqui meu bem tão triste
É demais qualquer minuto
Sem você
De que vale tudo isso
Se você não está aqui

Action: While she sings the toys move about the stage. Eventually she turns off the toys and just her voice remains as she sings. She puts on Mickey Mouse ears from the cot and an apron, still singing, and begins playing with the toy lawn mower stage left that blows bubbles as it is pushed. She leaves the lawn mower and begins packing up the toys like a maid who believes she is a wonderful singer. She picks up the traffic light, smiling as if it were a lover with her fake teeth. She freezes as if for a picture.

⁸⁹ One of Brazil's most enduring and popular song-writer/performers and a favourite with maids.



Figure 10.3 Roberto Carlos! Eu te amo!—I love you! (photo Pina Raiola)

Sound/light: There is a flash of light and the sound of a powder flash combined with broken glass. Lights dim.

10.2 I like a boy

Action: Simone sits on the pink armchair and addresses the audience still with her teeth in. She speaks like a child.

Simone: I like a boy. His name is Guilherme. He's 8, and I'm 9. His nickname is Gordo, it means fatty. He's got curly hair and green eyes. His skin is a little bit like mine.... No no no, it's a bit whiter. I told my friend Daisy that I liked him and she told him, and she told me later that he likes me too! We went to the square where we live and we held hands. That was the beginning.



Figure 10.4 Mouseferatu—in childish gothic horror: Guilherme paid me to do that! (photo Pina Raiola)

I went back home and told my mother that I had a boyfriend and she said: Who is he? And I said it's fatty. How old is he? And I said he's 8. And how old are you? And I said, 9. And then she said, I think you are too young to have a boyfriend!

One day I was watching from my window and I saw Guilherme making a drawing on the floor of the square of a voluptuous woman with big breasts! After finishing the drawing, he jumped on her and started humping, humping, humping, humping, humping!

After one week, I decided finishing the relationship. I told him I'm not your girlfriend anymore Guilherme. He didn't say a word.

The next day I went to the square to play with my girlfriends. To forget! A little black boy approached me with his big black eyes. He approached me slowly and suddenly I felt something warm—and wet on my feet. He pissed on my feet! I asked him: Why? Why? He showed me a one dollar coin and said: Guilherme paid me to do that!

10.3 Flight control

Sound/light: *Flight Control* soundtrack begins. As Simone begins to move a projection commences of the toy aeroplane propeller.

Action: Simone gets up and spins towards the plastic aeroplane behind the cot, emerging with it on her head, propeller spinning and lights a glowing. Simone moves to soundtrack while repeating parts of the text in Portuguese.

Flight control soundtrack text:

Simone: The plane is falling! Help!!! Flight control, flight control!

Davi: Flight control at your disposal how may I help you?



Figure 10.5 Flight Control: Simone flies plane (video Pete Brownstein)

Simone: My plane is falling!

Davi: Stay calm, to your right there's a red button, press it and it will activate auto-pilot, and then land in the nearest airport.

Simone: There's one problem.

Davi: What?

Simone: I don't where I am.

Davi: Not a worry, we'll alert all the other airports to search for you on radar, but first I need to know your plane number.

Simone: Number 004321

Davi: OK.

Simone: Argh!

Davi: What now?

Simone: Auto Pilot is losing control!

Davi: We've located you. You're lucky we know where you are. Get your parachute and jump!

Simone: Wait! I recognize your voice, where are you from?

Davi: Sou Brasileiro. Why?

Simone: What is your name?

Davi: That is classified information.

Simone: What's your date of birth?

Davi: 15th of November of 1995.

Simone: Ah, its sounds like....my sons voice!.....Is that you Davi!?

Davi: He he he n-n-no-no-no. I am in flight control Mum.....ooops! Forget I said that.....Anyway we're coming to get you so jump off the plane before it's too late!

Action: At the end of the soundtrack Simone freezes as again the lights flash and powder-flash is heard again.

Simone walks over to the cot, takes off the apron and puts on a false-moustache. She starts walking towards the audience like a macho Latin lover and begins flirting and blowing kisses.

Simone: (To a woman in the audience) What's your name?



Figure 10.6 What's your name? (video Pete Brownstein)

10.4 Love ate my name

Action: Simone crouches down stage-right as projection and soundscape commence:

Sound/light: An unsettling soundscape, using modified recordings of toys used in the performance, begins under a pre-recorded Portuguese text spoken by Simone. The text is an edited version of the poem *Os Três Mal-Amados* by João Cabral de Melo Neto. There is a simultaneous English translation projected in the style of typed text:

O amor comeu meu nome, minha identidade, meu retrato. O amor comeu minha certidão de nascimento,⁹⁰ minha genealogia, meu endereço. O amor comeu meus cartões de visita. O amor veio e comeu todos os papéis onde eu escrevera meu nome.

O amor comeu minhas roupas, meus lenços, minhas camisas. O amor comeu metros e metros de gravatas. O amor comeu a medida de meus ternos, o número de meus sapatos, o tamanho de meus chapéus. O amor comeu minha altura, meu peso, a cor de meus olhos e de meus cabelos.

.....

O amor comeu minha paz e minha guerra. Meu dia e minha noite. Meu inverno e meu verão. Comeu meu silêncio, minha dor de cabeça, meu medo da morte.

Projected text:

Love ate my name, my identity card, my portrait. Love ate my birth certificate, my genealogy, my address. Love ate my business cards. Love came and ate all the papers where I had written my name.

Love ate my clothes, my handkerchief and my shirts. Love ate metres and metres of my ties. Love ate the measurements of my suits, the size of my shoes, the size of my hats. Love ate my height, my weight, the colour of my eyes and my hair.

⁹⁰ A mistake. The spoken text should have read “certidão de idade”—age certificate—and not “certidão de nascimento”—birth certificate.

.....

Love ate my peace and my war. My day and my night. My winter
and my summer. Ate my silence, my headache, my fear of death.



Figure 10.7 Senhor Bibi Ferreira conceals weapon (photo Pina Raiola)

10.5 Senhor Bibi Ferreira

Sound: As the text ends, a musical modulation, back-and-forth, begins between *Tristan and Isolde* by Wagner and a bossa nova rendition of George & Ira Gershwin's '*S Wonderful*' by João Gilberto (Gilberto 1977; Kristeva 1982).

Action: A pistol is revealed underneath the roses as she picks them up, that she pretends to hide from the audience, staring at the door and laughing in a *dastardly* fashion.

She walks towards the cot, offering the flowers to the baby doll, then drops the flowers and assaults the doll with the pistol against its head. Under the music she starts babbling in Portuguese in imitation of Brazilian Actress Bibi Ferreira playing Medea by Paulo Pontes:

Simone: Muito bem Jasao voce vai escutar as contas que eu vou lhe fazer, te conheci moleque, frouxo, perna banba, barba rala, bolso sem fundo , nao sabia nada de mulher nem de samba e tinha um bruto de um medo de olhar pro mundo, as marcas de um home tu tirou todas de mim , o primeiro prata , o primeiro refrao, o primeiro vilao, o primeiro estribilho, te dei cada sinal do seu temperamento, fabriquei material prima para o teu tutano e mesmo essa ambiao que nesse momento se volta contra mim u te dei por engano, fui eu Jasao voce andava tonto quando eu te encontrei, fabriquei energia que nao era minha para iluminar um Estrada que eu te aponte!

Action: The Macho suddenly screams in high-pitched horror and freezes.



Figure 10.8 Sr Ferreira screams dropping the baby (video Pete Brownstein)

Sound/Light: The light flashes again with flash sound.

Action: He drops the doll. He walks towards the audience, pointing the pistol at a man.

Simone: Are you real, or are you a duck?

10.6 Goodbye with the supremacy of the fox hunters

Action: Simone takes off the moustache in front of the audience, sticks it back on the cot. She walks towards the phone, makes it ring by pressing the button, then walks away, only to stop in mock-suspense and come back to it again to make it ring again. She does this 5 times, each time she comes back to the phone she gets closer. Simone finally sits in the chair and holding the handset to her ear, presses another button on the phone that plays a recorded voice:

Hello, I'm Cinderella!

Simone stays seated and listens to the voice of *Eduardo* talking about colonialism and offering advice for a performance.

Sound: Simone's pitch-shifted voice reads José Eduardo's text over an unsettling/comic soundscape of falling tones and toy sounds:

Simone: The English and all the other fox hunters ignore the intelligence of the Arabs and many other people. Imagine what will happen when the Africans start putting dynamite in their cocks?

Goodbye with the supremacy of the fox hunters!

I don't know Simone, if we artists don't awaken we are going to die like a fire cracker that fails because of the humidity.

Meanwhile, there's still time for you to do *Maria Banana*. Like Carmen Miranda but instead of having bananas on your head, you sit on them.



Figure 10.9 Playing José Eduardo (photo Pina Raiola)

Scene 1. You peel thousands of bananas. You take a distance, run and jump on top of the bananas. Do this for about 5 hours.

Scene 2. Idiot like you are, like all the people from the banana republic are idiots..... you choose one banana and start to nest like a chicken nesting an egg.....

Scene 3. To the surprise of the audience two chickens are born, one Jewish and one Arabic chicken. The message of this fable is: What does a Jewish chicken raised in Brazil have in common with an Arabic chicken raised in Brazil?

Our greatest joke and tragedy Simone, is that we don't know how to throw dynamite.

10.7 Irma Rotina

Sound/lights: Percussive music begins—an adaptation of a recording *Piazzito Carreteiro* (Philips n.d.). The sounds of toys used in the performance were overlayed on the orig. Lighting turns a menacing red.



Figure 10.10 Nun embodying spirits (photo Pina Raiola)

Action: She gets up and walks to the installation where there is a suitcase with toy pistols (cap guns) and lollies inside, and a nuns habit waiting. She puts on the habit and some vampire teeth. She starts getting *possessed*, moving between two entities: an old black woman (*preta velha*) and a child (*espírito de crianças*). She spins and falls as if going further into a very intense trance. She keeps making glottal sounds, coughs, laughs and sighs. She distributes lollies and guns to the audience. She talks to selected audience members giving *psychic readings* of their thoughts, feelings and lives. She sucks lollies and gives them to *her clients*, telling it will bring them protection, like Umbanda spiritual ceremonies in Brazil, where mediums are possessed by various spirits offering advice.



Figure 10.11 Nun in ecstatic action amongst ex-votos (video Pete Brownstein)

Eventually she goes to the pink armchair and speaks:

Simone: Eu vou contar até três. Um, dois, três! Você pode atirar em mim por favor?! I am going to count to three. One, two, three! Can you please shoot me?!”



Figure 10.12 Nun gives blessings—audience poised to shoot (photo Pina Raiola)

Action: The audience gleefully begin shoot with the cap-guns. Simultaneously a soundscape begins with additional cap-gun sounds and extremely loud but infrequent sounds of military weaponry—automatic weapon and mortar fire etc. The nun speaks the following text in-between being *shot* at *random*:

Simone: My name is Simone. When I grow up I want to be an actor. I want to be a dancer. I want to be an artist. I just don't want to be a teacher! I don't dance very well. I don't speak English very well. I like Coca Cola. Roberto Carlos meu amor! Eu te amo! Eu te amo!



Figure 10.13 Eu vou contar até três—I'll count to three (video Pete Brownstein)

I can explain everything! I come from a place, full of dinosaurs! There is one big huge dinosaur made by stone! It's called Peiropolis, full of dinosaurs, close to my home town of Uberaba!



Figure 10.14 Nun shot during confession (photo Pina Raiola)

The chicken has a real life. And she'll be the main character tonight.

Action: She points to the chicken and starts making a deep throaty *alien* sound as if going into trance again, the nun's habit over her face, arms out in front like a ghost. She is accompanied by a

sound recording of that same noise. She walks towards the cot, stepping on the way on a squeaky rubber chicken, making it squeak.

Projection: The following text is projected, a words from her mother:

Simone, put your lipstick on you look horrible. This is my daughter. She's very exotic.... You can see that she doesn't match in colour or style. There is a place for women like that. Have a look in our etiquette book, page 27 letter D. When I went to the hospital to give birth to her I put in my suit case a black dress with a note saying "If I die, bury me in this dress".

10.8 *Little World* home movie

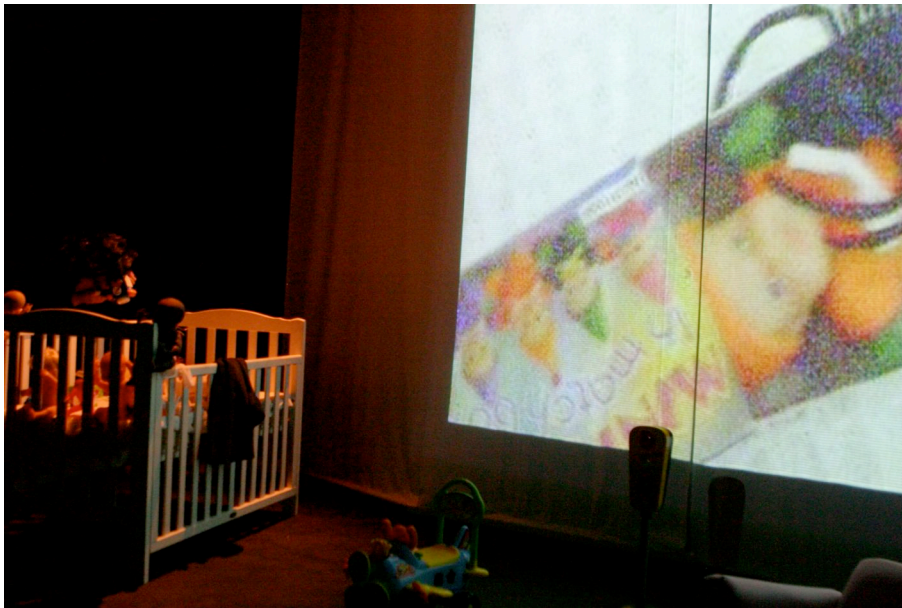


Figure 10.15 Simone, left, films with toy camera (photo Pina Raiola)

Action: While the projection is typing to the screen, she takes off the headpiece of the habit off and she puts on toy thick-lensed plastic glasses. She steps on the chicken again, smiles joyfully to the audience and walks towards a little plastic toy house where she puts a toy dummy with fake teeth around it in her mouth. She steps again on the chicken walking back to the cot. She picks up a toy super-8 camera and starts filming the little world which has been set up in the cot.

Projection/sound: A mock closed-circuit projection of Simone's toy camera. The toys in the cot are filmed arranged up in strange/comic positions--*the little world* she has created in the cot. The music that accompanies this is ambient in character and constructed from recordings of music boxes used in the performance.



Figure 10.16 Toy movie projection detail (video Carlos Gomes & Simone Reis)

Action: Then she puts on the kangaroo mask and an electronic Superman glove and starts playing with a toy iron-bar. As she bends the bar, the gloves make a crunching noise as if the bar made of steel. She sits again on the pink chair takes off the kangaroo mask, puts on the Mickey Mouse ears, and picks up a toy megaphone. Speaking into it, her voice is distorted at a low pitch:

10.9 I like pink



Figure 10.17 Where did you buy this gorgeous jacket? (video Pete Brownstein)

Simone: I like pink. One day I saw a pink jacket in a shop that I like in Brunswick Street Melbourne. And when I saw the jacket I could not avoid buying it. I was so excited about the colour. However things are quite expensive in this shop in Brunswick Street Melbourne—anyway I bought this jacket and each time I want to be complemented, I wear this jacket. I'm living in Perth and each time I wear this jacket somebody makes a comment. One day in a café a woman said "what a gorgeous jacket, where did you buy it?" and I said Melbourne. And she said "Of course Melbourne, you can find so many beautiful things in Melbourne". Another day in a café a man approached me and said "Your hair is so black and your skin is so dark, it creates a beautiful contrast with your pink jacket". Another day a woman asked me "Where did you buy this gorgeous jacket?" and I said Melbourne. And she said "Oh why don't you bring the funky things

from Melbourne to Perth? I think everybody loves pink but nobody is brave enough to admit it". That's my Melbournian revolution in Perth.



Figure 10.18 Flash: Melbournian revolution (photo Pina Raiola)

Action: Simone holds up the megaphone in a revolutionary pose.

Sound/light: Lights and sound flash

10.10 Vai chupar o seu pirulito!

Action: She transforms her posture, putting her legs on the arms of the chair, wiggling her feet like they are the talking hands of an Italian with her arms crossed in a contorted position behind her back. She begins speaking a *monster* text in Portuguese, shifting between a shrill high-pitched voice to a low demonic voice. During text she crosses to the cot. Jumping into the cot with her legs hanging out of the cot, where she finishes the monster text.



Figure 10.19 Monster (photo Pina Raiola)

Action: She lies down inside the cot. As she lies, she puts on a mask and winds up a musical *TV* as a projection *types* a letter from her mother.



Figure 10.20 Monster in cot (photo Pina Raiola)

Projection:

Dear Simone,

I'm sending you the book of spiritualism. There are 500 questions and 500 answers. For each question there is an answer.

Don't forget spiritualism is not a religion. It is a science!

A bird cannot fly with just one wing, it is necessary to maintain an equilibrium between faith and reason.

10.11 Macabéa

Action: Simone reappears with a big rubber female mask still with its cardboard label. The mask has purple hair and distorted yet sexy elongated features. Simone, as *Macabéa* is carrying the wind-up TV music that has a moving scene of animals in a zoo on it. She wanders around the space to the music from the box, turns on the traffic light, walking as if she has just arrived in a city unknown to her.



Figure 10.21 Macabéa in the traffic (photo Pina Raiola)

Sound: As she turns on the traffic light a traffic soundscape commences made from toy traffic sounds. These are principally recordings of the traffic light which has a voice in Spanish giving commands to cars such as: *Está loco! Espera!* (It's crazy! Wait!)

Action: Macabéa continues to walk back-and-forth on the stage until.....

Sound/lighting: There is a squeal of car breaks then a crash with a flash of light. A beat later there is a second flash of light and sound with Macabéa still motionless on the ground.

10.12 Carinhoso

Pixinguinha's music *Carinhoso* sung by Elis Regina (Regina 1966) begins to be played and a typewriter text translation is shown. The music has its pitch modulated in slow *queasy* transitions from low to high and back.



Figure 10.22 Simone eats chrysanthemum (photo Pina Raiola)

Action: Simone gets up, turns off the traffic light, walks towards the pink chair and sits on it. She dances in an Afro-Brazilian butoh style. She puts in another set of fake teeth then picks up a chrysanthemum, eating it as she dances and lip synchs the song, in slow motion Portuguese. The text in English reads:

*My heart
I don't know why
Beats so happily
When I see you
And my eyes, they are smiling
and follow you
Through the streets
But even so
You flee from me*

*Ah! If you only knew how caring I could be
And how much I want you
And how sincere my love is
Then you would no longer flee from me!
Come come come come!
Feel the warmth of my lips
In search of yours
Come kill this passion that devours my heart...
This is the only way i will be happy...
so happy!*



Figure 10.23 Meu coração não sei porque (photo Pina Raiola)

In Portuguese:

Meu coração
 Não sei porque
 Bate feliz, quando te vê
 E os meus olhos ficam sorrindo
 E pelas ruas vão te seguindo
 Mas mesmo assim, foges de mim

Ah! Se tu soubesses
 Como sou tão carinhoso
 E muito e muito que te quero
 E como é sincero o meu amor
 Eu sei que tu não fugirias mais de mim
 Vem, vem, vem, vem
 Vem sentir o calor
 Dos lábios meus
 À procura dos teus
 Vem matar esta paixão
 Que me devora o coração
 E só assim então
 Serei feliz, bem feliz

Sound/lights: As the music finishes the lights fade to black and there is a sound and lighting flash on Simone who is motionless. *Magic* music “No Love But Your Love” performed by Los Brasillos then commences (Los Brasillos 1967).

10.13 Galinha mecânica



Figure 10.24 Chicken jumping hoops (photo Pina Raiola)

Action: Simone walks around the space as if she presenting a magic show in circus, with the same fake teeth, smiling and posing. She presents a toy chicken to the audience as if about to do a very tricky act. She picks up a plastic hoola-hoop, and she dances the chicken in time with the music through the hoop, asking for applause each time the chicken goes through. Then she puts the hoop on the floor and activates the chicken inside the hoop to walk around then lay an egg. Each time the chicken lays the egg she presents it to the audience asking for more applause. She does this three times before packing up the hoop and the chicken.



Figure 10.25 *Sucesso!* Chicken lays egg (video Pete Brownstein)

10.14 Slide show

As the magic music ends, she picks up a toy slide projector, and hands it to an audience member, then holds up a small screen herself, to project on. There are images such dinosaur skeletons, monkeys, human organs. With each different image, which she controls with a remote control, she introduces a member of her family. These stories are semi-autobiographical.

Simone: This is my grandfather. He played the flute. He liked my laugh and one day he choked because of it. He said that my laugh was exactly like his sister who was an exotic catholic nun. He died when he was 106. He is the reason I am an artist.



Figure 10.26 Simone holding small projection screen (photo Pina Raiola)

Action: Slide change.

Simone: This is my grandmother. She broke his flute.

Action: Slide change.

Simone: This is my father. His family were from Italy, but he never spoke with his hands

Action: Slide change.

Simone: This is my mother. She is an etiquette teacher. She was found fainted in the lift last week.

Action: Slide change.

Simone: This is my other grandfather. He was a healer. He died by a heart attack.

Action: Slide change.

Simone: My other grandmother. She had 18 children. After she became a widow she lived with a black man 20 years younger than her and they adopted 5 more children

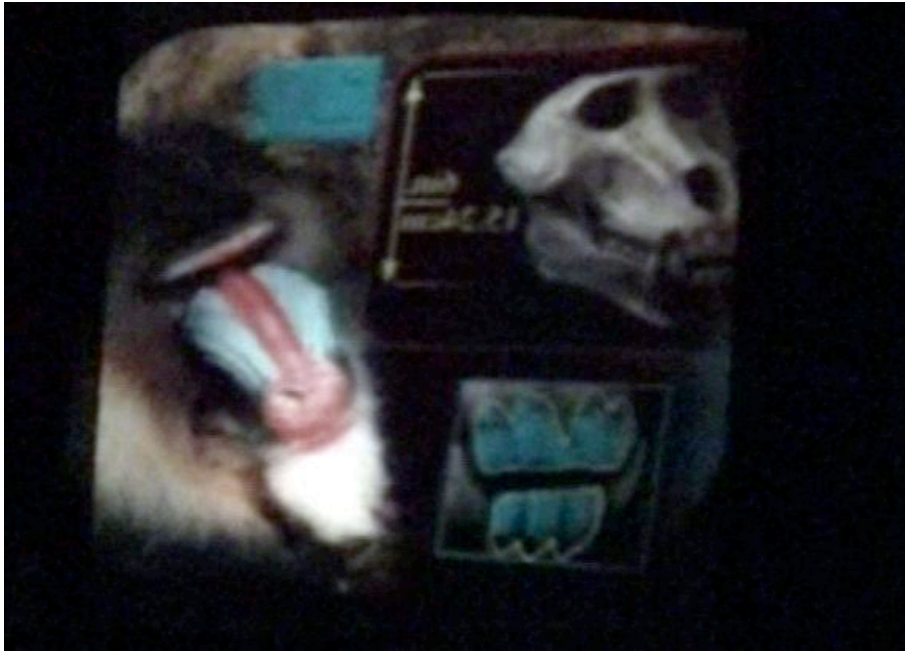


Figure 10.27 This is my father—toy slide projection detail (video Pete Brownstein)

Action: Slide change.

Simone: This is my son. His English is much better than mine.

Action: Slide change.

Simone: This is Fausto. He was my first platonic love. He had a moustache and a car called *Maverick*.

Action: Slide change.

Simone: This is Tia Dina. She helps my mother with the housework. She knew everything about Fausto.

Action: Slide change.

Simone: This is my brother. When I was last in Brazil he and his son were shot in a violent assault. I went to the church and lit the special candles in the shape of each part of the body that was shot, head, neck, lungs and spine. The priest hung them on the ceiling of the church. I had the feeling that my brother was divided in many parts.

Action: Slide change.

Simone: And this is me.....



Figure 10.28 *Mulher do Samba*—in carnival dress (video Carlos Gomes & Simone Reis)

10.15 Finale

Projection/sound: *Palladium* by Ed Lincoln begins to play (Lincoln 1964). Footage of Simone is projected, dancing in a carnival style dress which is *too heavy* for her laden with fake flowers. She keeps falling over then gets up again. This dance is a very playful and childlike version of that of orixá (Candomblé entities) dances.



Figure 10.29 Soccer ball implants (video Pete Brownstein)

Action: Simone returns in a second mock-circus routine, this time with a basket of small soccer balls. She dresses herself in front of the audience, putting soccer balls as her breasts and bum and tying the basket with the rest of the balls on her head as a hat. One by one she puts the balls under her skirt then lets them drop down as if she is giving birth until there are soccer balls all over the floor. The performance ends.



Figure 10.30 Final bow: and this is really me (photo Pina Raiola)

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